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AUGUST
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PUBLISHED
TWICE A MONTH

Adventure

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How I Improved My Memory In One Evening

The Amazing Experience of Victor Jones

"Of *course* I place you! Mr. Addi[illegible] of Seattle.

"If I remember correctly—and I *do* remember correctly—Mr. Burroughs, the lumberman, introduced me to you at the luncheon of the Seattle Rotary Club three years ago in May. This is a pleasure, indeed! I haven't laid eyes on you since that day. How is the lumber business? And how did that amalgamation work out?"

The assurance of the speaker—in the crowded corridor of the Hotel McAlpin—compelled me to turn and look at him. Though I must say it is not my usual habit to "listen in" even in a hotel lobby.

"He is David M. Roth, the most famous memory expert in the United States," said my friend Kennedy, answering my question before I could get it out. "He will show you a lot more wonderful things than that before the evening is over."

And he did.

As we went into the banquet room the toastmaster was introducing a long line of guests to Mr. Roth. I got in line and when it came my turn, Mr. Roth asked, "What are your initials, Mr. Jones, and your business connection and telephone number?" Why he asked this I learned later, when he picked out from the crowd the 60 men he had met two hours before and called each by name without a mistake. What is more, he named each man's business and telephone number, for good measure.

I won't tell you all the other amazing things this man did except to tell how he called back, without a minute's hesitation, long lists of numbers, bank clearings, prices, lot numbers, parcel post rates and anything else the guests gave him in rapid order.

* * * * *

When I met Mr. Roth again—which you may be sure I did the first chance I got—he rather bowled me over by saying, in his quiet, modest way:

"There is nothing miraculous about my remembering anything I want to remember, whether it be names, faces, figures, facts or something I have read in a magazine.

"*You can do this just as easily as I do.* Anyone with an average mind can learn quickly to do exactly the same things which seem so miraculous when I do them.

"My own memory," continued Mr. Roth, "was originally very faulty. Yes, it was—a really *poor* memory. On meeting a man I would lose his name in thirty seconds, while now there are probably 10,000 men and women in the United States, many of whom I have met but once, whose names I can call instantly on meeting them."

"That is all right for you, Mr. Roth," I interrupted, "you have given years to it. But how about me?"

"Mr. Jones," he replied, "I can teach you the secret of a good memory in one evening. This is not a guess, because I have done it with thousands of pupils. In the first of seven simple lessons which I have prepared for home study, I show you the basic principle of my whole system and you will find it not hard work as you might fear—but just like playing a fascinating game. I will prove it to you."

He didn't have to prove it. His Course did; I got it the very next day from his publishers, the Independent Corporation.

When I tackled the first lesson, I suppose I was the most surprised man in forty-eight states to find that I had learned—in about one hour—how to remember a list of one hundred words so that I could call them off forward and back without a single mistake.

That first lesson *stuck*. And so did the other six.

Read this letter from Terence J. McManus, of the firm of Olcott, Bonynge, McManus & Ernst, Attorneys and Counsellors at Law, 170 Broadway, and one of the most famous trial lawyers in New York:

"May I take occasion to state that I regard your service in giving this system to the world as a public benefaction? The wonderful simplicity of the method, and the ease with which its principles may be acquired, especially appeal to me. I may add that I already had occasion to test the effectiveness of the first two lessons in the preparation for trial of an important action in which I am about to engage."

Mr. McManus didn't put it a bit too strong. The Roth Course is priceless! I can absolutely *count* on my memory now. I can call the name of most any man I have met before—and I am getting better all the time. I can remember any figures I wish to remember. Telephone numbers come to mind instantly, once I have filed them by Mr. Roth's easy method. Street addresses are just as easy.

The old fear of forgetting (you know what that is) has vanished. I used to be "scared stiff" on my feet—because I wasn't *sure*. I couldn't remember what I wanted to say.

Now I am sure of myself, and confident and "easy as an old shoe" when I get on my feet at the club, or at a banquet, or in a business meeting, or in any social gathering.

Perhaps the most enjoyable part of it all is that I have become a good conversationalist—and I used to be as silent as a sphinx when I got into a crowd of people who knew things.

Now I can call up like a flash of lightning most any fact I want right at the instant I need it most. I used to think a "hair trigger" memory belonged only to the prodigy and genius. Now I see that every man of us has that kind of a memory if he only knows how to make it work right.

I tell you it is a wonderful thing, after groping around in the dark for so many years, to be able to switch the big searchlight on your mind and *see* instantly everything you want to remember.

This Roth Course will do wonders in your office.

Since we took it up you never hear anyone in *our* office say, "I guess" or "I think it was about so much," or "I forget that right now," or "I can't remember," or "I must look up his name." Now they are right there with the answer—like a shot.

Have you ever heard of "Multigraph" Smith? Real name H. Q. Smith, Division Manager of the Multigraph Sales Company, Ltd., in Montreal. Here's just a bit from a letter of his that I saw last week:

"Here is the whole thing in a nutshell: Mr. Roth has a most remarkable Memory Course. It is simple, and easy as falling off a log. Yet with one hour a day of practice anyone—I don't care who he is—can improve his memory 100% in a week and 1000% in six months."

My advice to you is don't wait another minute. Send to Independent Corporation for Mr. Roth's amazing course and see what a wonderful memory you have got. Your dividends in *increased earning power* will be enormous.

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So confident is the Independent Corporation, the publishers of the Roth Memory Course, that once you have an opportunity to see in your own home how easy it is to double, yes triple your memory power in a few short hours, that they are willing to send the course on free examination.

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Adventure 8-3-19

Will YOU Help Overcome this Shortage of Motion Picture Stories?

BY F. McGREW WILLIS

(Formerly of Ince, Fox, Pathe, Universal, etc.)

The motion picture industry faces a crisis. Enough good stories are not to be obtained. Producers say it is **impossible** to obtain them. They admit they are compelled to produce stories that are not good because of this fact. But now, with **your** help, I am going to break this crisis. I am going to make it **possible** to obtain them. And I am going to get them from new writers and from writers whose stories have been turned back by these very studios. **In short, from you.** And whether you have ever written one motion picture story in your whole life is immaterial. Or whether you have written a hundred unsuccessful ones. **For up to now the outside writer has not been given a chance to know how to prepare his plot properly after he originated it.**

For over four years I have been feature writer in the leading studios. I have written over two hundred produced stories. I have been special writer for the biggest stars. Now I am going to place my knowledge at **your** disposal. I am going to show you the inside way of writing —THE DIRECT, DETAILED METHOD THAT STAFF WRITERS USE IN SUBMITTING THEIR OWN STORIES TO THE PRODUCERS. This is the **only** method of writing that has the personal indorsement of the most noted directors in the motion picture industry. **And until you write your scripts this way, you are wasting your time.**

It is absolutely the first time writers outside the studios have ever been offered this opportunity. And this method of writing can be learned in **one evening's study.** If you can write ordinary, everyday English, you can write motion picture stories the direct, detailed way.

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I am going to extend every possible aid to make you a successful writer. I am even going to try to sell your stories for you without charging you one penny for my work. **I positively will not accept any fee or commission on any sale whatever.**

First, I want you to have a copy of my book, "The Inside Story of Motion Picture Writing." It's free for the asking. Then if you are really in earnest about writing photoplays, I want you to become a pupil of this Institute. The full cost of the entire course is but TWELVE DOLLARS, including the use of my free sales bureau. Not a cent more. And I protect you by an absolute **money-back** guarantee.

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Lynn F. Reynolds, director of features for Universal, Triangle and Fox, and noted for his wonderful productions of stories of the great out-doors, says:

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Lynn F. Reynolds

The F. McGrew Willis Institute

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August 3rd 1919

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The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

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IN THE FAR PLACES

ONLY one white man has been there before. Far in the North Country it lies, an oasis of life in the frozen waste. For twenty-five years *Jimmie Dunn* and *Marshall Wells* planned the trip for *Jimmie Lad* when he should be a man. In "The Gift of the Barren Grounds," in our next issue, Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton tell how *Jimmie Lad* starts out, to encounter in the snow the one thing for which their plans had not provided.

NO ONE knows what had sent him there — the only white man in the Indian penal colony. And he has a secret, a great and terrible secret with which he offers to buy his freedom and which brings *Sinclair* to him — the same *Sinclair* who saved India and whose next adventure is told in "Bumps," by S. B. H. Hurst, in our Mid-August issue.

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The BOSS of MIRAGE

A Complete Novelette

BY

E. S. PLADWELL

Author of "According to Breed," "Highly Civilized," etc.

HE RUSHED into the dance-hall like a cyclone, jingling spurs and holding ready hands on the pistols at his hips. He stopped and glowered about, seeking enemies. Finding none, he declared war anyhow.

"Yip-yip-yip!" he yelled. "Yow-e-e-e! I'm a zippin', rippin' terror on wheels! I'm the man that invented cemeteries!" He looked about fiercely, seeking contradiction. "Watch my smoke!" he invited. "I eat a cougar every mornin' an' ten dozen rattlesnakes at night! Yip-e-e-e-e! Every man that crosses my path bites the dust! Wow!"

"Big Dan" Dolan wearily uncurled his vast bulk from a chair in the rear of the place, ambled over to the warrior, knocked him down, picked him up, kicked him into the roadway and then returned to his chair and table.

"That's the third this month," he explained to his younger companion, seated opposite. "Every time some four-flusher gits full of licker, he thinks he's an army. Like that feller. Seems like I've seen him before, but I can't quite place him." And Dolan's broad face wrinkled.

The eyes of the quiet, slim young man were still bulging. Dolan's mighty fist had sounded like a hammer hitting a board, and yet the other man had been armed!

"Nothin' to be skeered about," demurred Dolan. "The real bad-man has his mouth shut and his eyes open. This fool had his mouth open. Nothin' to it. What was you sayin' about your ranch?"

The younger man began to aline in his mind the story which was being shrewdly wormed from him. He had not come here for sympathy, but he found himself granted it anyhow; so he decided to give Dolan his confidence because the big owner of the Gem Saloon and General Merchandise Store seemed to ask it.

Carlton was comparatively a newcomer. The heavy-browed giant, with just a tinge of gray in his black hair, was the boss of the settlement and apparently the hardest character in the district. By reputation the world to him held two classes of people, friends and enemies. The former could have anything and the latter nothing, not even decent tombstones. If he thought a man should be eliminated, he would see him killed without compunction. And yet Harry Carlton found him friendly, sociable and likeable.

While the old saloon-keeper looked him

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over quizzically, Carlton let his absent gaze go through a side window to where, thirty miles to the south, a copper-colored mountain stood out from a gaunt and treeless range of hills and glistened in the sunlight as if it held the treasures of the Incas.

"It—it sounds like a nightmare," he began cautiously. "You see, I'm a civil engineer. Six years ago I came through this country on a railroad survey. One day while hunting in the hills I came into a little valley that made my mouth water. There was a bare copper mountain standing over a timbered slope leading to a little stream, and that led to a big meadow and lost itself in a little green marsh. Willows by the marsh, and oaks in the meadows, and pines up the slope. It was a lost valley—only one way in. You pass a lot of loose-dirt scenery till you turn around a bare granite knoll and look into—paradise!"

"That's Lost Deer Valley, all right," nodded Dolan. "It's a fine place."

The big man smiled a bit at the rhapsody. Carlton's regular-featured, fine-drawn face was alight. If it were not for his square jaw and level eyes, Dolan might have appraised him differently. But, though Carlton was a "city man," he was not a tenderfoot. He was an engineer who had surveyed part of the desert.

"After I went away, I got office work," continued Carlton. "It lasted five years, and then I got—sick. Meantime I'd been dreaming about that valley. So, before the sickness pulled me down for keeps, I decided to come out here with my wife and settle down on the place. I had enough money to buy about one-third of the valley; so I bought it. The fellow who owned the place was Ebenezer Finch. A fine, wholesouled, noble character. A regular prince!"

Dolan grinned. The bitter words seemed to caricature the miser of Lost Deer Valley—the stoop-shouldered, sharp-faced, red-haired slouch whose cheating and sanctimony were known through the county.

"He only asked a reasonable price for the two hundred acres," continued the engineer. "It's right at the lower end of the valley, straddling the creek and straddling the road that runs out. I made a topographic survey and planned an irrigation system. The ground makes an easy slope toward the lower end of the valley; so, by diverting the stream where it enters my property on the higher ground, I could run a ditch along the inner rim of the hills and shoot the water down to any place I liked. The stream runs all year from Lost Deer Spring; so I figured I'd have water enough to raise anything. My water-rights were perfect. Everything was fine as silk. And then the stream quit business."

"I knew it," grunted Dolan. "Hosses."

"It was the horses," nodded Carlton. "Ebenezer Finch suddenly brought three hundred head of stock over from his Escalante ranch, and they drank the water at the source."

"Did you speak to him about it?"

"Speak? I spoke, argued, raved, prayed and swore! He just stood there and sniveled his regrets." Carlton's bitter voice took a high-pitched, mournful intonation that mimicked Finch's whine exactly. "I'm right sorry abaout it," he mocked, "but I don't see's haow I kin change things. O' course, you got your rights to the lower stream. I don't deny no man his rights. Live an' let live—that's my mottow. The law sez the man on the upper stream kin only hold water fer domestic an' stock purposes; so I'm right glad to let ye hev what I kin let through." Carlton took his own voice. "—— him! He's entitled to the upper stream for stock purposes only; so he brought in the stock!"

"Um. How did the talk wind up?" grunted Dolan.

"Why—he almost cried. Said I mustn't judge him wrongly. Told me how good a friend he was. Described every neighborly act he'd done. I didn't know whether to apologize or knock him down. Finally he shook hands and left me standing there, wondering. That was two months ago. After that he'd drop over and give me helpful hints on how to run my ranch. Meantime, not a drop from Lost Deer Creek. I couldn't decide whether I was being helped or victimized till finally I stumbled on to his full history."

Dan Dolan chuckled.

"What happened next?"

"Well—I can't afford to nurse a dry ranch; so I put it up to him straight. First he said, 'Harsh words butter no parsnips;' then he just yelled. I'm not very strong; so I used a fence-rail. Then, when my temper went down, I regretted things.

"I MADE threats. I said I'd get that water if I had to clean out his stock and him into the bargain. That was a month ago. Since then the valley hasn't been healthy for any one. Some one's been poisoning his horses, and somebody tried to burn my house. I sleep now with a shotgun alongside my bed, and the wife's close to hysterics."

"Where did you learn about Finch?" asked Dolan suddenly.

"The old Government land-agent. He knows the whole county." Carlton tolled off victims on his fingers. "A man named Brady had the ranch before me. He died two years ago, after selling the land back to Finch cheaply. The man before that was Dingle or Dingwall. The man before that was one Tom Fulton."

"Tom Fulton?" interrupted Dolan. "Fulton? Yeh, you're right; it was Tom Fulton. Go on."

"The man before that was named Morris, and I forget the rest. Every one of them lacked water, couldn't irrigate and had to sell the ranch back to Finch—very cheap. Two of them had lawsuits but couldn't prove anything. In other words, Ebenezer Finch uses the prettiest little valley in the county as bait for a legal, logical skin-game. He sells the ranch, parches the land, terrorizes the victims in one way or another and then gets the ranch back through a friendly deal!"

Dolan's stubby fingers drummed on the table, and he stared at Carlton as if to make sure of his estimate of the man. He saw a decent, clean young American, neither blond nor dark, neither brilliant nor witless, but just an ordinary well-educated young fellow who looked as if he might be worth helping.

"That's right," he nodded. "It's a swindle. You're stung. Might as well pack up your duds and mosey along. Only—I wouldn't."

"You mean—fight it out?" asked Carlton.

"Stick," grunted the big saloon-keeper. Then suddenly he became halting and diffident, as if trying to pick the words to outline his attitude. "I'm sort of neutral," he explained. "I'm jest watchin' on the side-lines. Mebbe I'm playin' my own game, at that. We'll see. I got no special interest in you. I'm only a booster for the county. What we need is decent people. You and your wife seem like what we want. If your sort always gits froze out, there's nothin' for this county but booze and roughs forever. Savvy?"

Carlton had hoped for understanding from this burly, rough-handed saloon-keeper in shirt-sleeves, but such idealism from the owner of the worst "sin palace" in the county was unexpected. The big boss caught his look and frowned.

"Yeh, I know what you're thinkin'," boomed Dolan's heavy voice in its choppy manner. "Dolan keeps a dance-hall. Booze. Women. Dolan, the merchant, may be different. He's gittin' a little old. Beginnin' to look ahead like a merchant should. This country's got to have decent people. She's goin' to git 'em!"

Carlton was beginning to gage this new friend. The big, heavy-browed fighter stood alone in this community, and, a little chastened by the years, without wife, family or close pals, he was starting to feel his loneliness. His talk was not reform. It was friendship. The engineer knew he had come to the right place.

"I won't take up your fight, but you're goin' to git a square deal!" continued Dolan. "Mebbe I'll have a scheme for you pretty soon. Mebbe not. Anyhow, go back and fight it out!"

"I will!" said the engineer, arising and gripping the other's big hand for just a moment and then letting it go.

Effusiveness would have spoiled things, and he knew it. Then with a nod he walked to the door and mounted his bay horse and started for home, heartened by the knowledge that the toughest, shrewdest old ruffian in the district was a friend and possibly an ally. He was ignorant of the political and social conditions within this tumultuous county, ignorant of the subconscious motives of Dolan and totally ignorant of the size of the battle he had entered into. He only knew that he had gained a friend whose advice and backing might be well worth while, and, thus satisfied, he started on the long trail toward the green valley under the copper mountain.

II

TWO hours later Carlton was riding along a winding road on the side of a barren, rocky mountain range. Sometimes, when the dust settled or side-hills failed to obstruct his view, he could see

the great, hazy country spread below him to the westward, shimmering yellow and brown in the heat-wave. Far to the northward lay Dolan's settlement, its buildings hidden by the mist of the distance. Far to the south the gray heat-wave blurred the miles that led to the county-seat.

Eastward, to the left, the rocks on the steep mountain range above the rider reflected baleful glares from the late afternoon sunlight, and above those rocks he could see the tip of the big copper dome that stood over his home. One mile more and he would be in the valley. The rider managed to urge his sweaty horse into a gallop just as something stinging and vicious whined through the air behind him.

Carlton jumped. He jerked back on the reins. The horse stood on its hind legs. A muffled report came from somewhere among the boulders above. Carlton's eyes squinted toward a mass of gray rocks under the shoulder of the copper mountain.

"The devil!" muttered the engineer, undecided, while the horse pranced.

Another bullet zipped past the animal's nose and spattered into a red rock below. Carlton made up his mind instantly. He jabbed spurs into the bay so savagely that it laid back its ears and flew.

Over shale rock, over hard ledges, over sandy washes the panting bay sped toward the gateway of gray-green boulders that marked the entrance to the valley. The bullets ceased coming. The marksman's vantage-point was out of range, hidden by cliffs and side-hills. The engineer's mind was working fast. The man who fired at him had a rifle. Carlton only had a pistol in a holster under his light khaki jacket. If he could get to close quarters, he might investigate things. That was his plan.

The horse reached the corner of Lost Deer Gap and started to turn in. Carlton halted him, dismounted, slapped the animal on the flank and walked deliberately along the outer rim of the granite gates of Lost Deer Valley. The horse started for home. Carlton started to climb.

Warily, carefully, trying to give no hint of his coming, the engineer scrambled upward over hot ledges of gray stone or little wastes of yellow sand. Once the ugly flat head of a diamond-back rattler disputed him from the top of a bluish rock, but he gave it the right of way. Higher up a pungent smell told him he was coming into a nest of them; so he detoured. Still higher he came upon the trail of a bobcat in a patch of streaky brown dirt, but he noticed it only subconsciously. He was on the spine of the ridge now, and ahead was the giant pile of gray rocks where his enemy had lurked. Carlton surmised who it was, but he was not quite sure. Ebenezer Finch seemed too sanctimonious for this sort of business.

The engineer began to crawl. Hot rocks blistered his hands, and the sun heated the metal on his blue pistol-barrel, but he wiped the sweat from his brow and kept going ahead. He made for the western edge in order to keep off the sky-line. His foot slipped on a rock which hit another, which struck another, until a little avalanche of rock and dirt thundered down the hill and gathered momentum.

A bullet whistled past Carlton. A rifle roared almost in front of him, and a wisp of smoke blew around the corner of a big rock. Carlton started dodging forward in zigzag leaps. The rifle cracked again, but he reached the rock. The smoke had just come from its east side; so he ran around the west side, just as he heard the lever of the rifle throwing another cartridge into place. Wild with anger, aching to deal with this assassin, the engineer forgot his shortening wind and cha ged like a wild bull.

A vague figure moved in front of him, blurred by the gloomy shade of the big rock. Carlton pulled trigger just as a big-bore rifle delivered its thundering load through his hat. Carlton pulled trigger twice more. The gusts of fire and smoke turned the place into a smelly inferno.

"Yow!" came a shrill, agonized scream from the figure in front.

Carlton's finger twitched on the trigger, but he refrained. The man with the Winchester hurled it away and let it smash on the rocks while he hunched over and held his right leg, moaning.

"What does this mean?" roared Carlton.

"Oh! Ouch!" cried Ebenezer Finch.

He sat down and swayed while his lean, wrinkled face contorted with pain.

Carlton did not know whether to shoot, strike, swear or laugh. The cold-blooded attempt at assassination made him furious, but the ludicrous figure rendered him helpless to act.

"Well?" he rasped.

"It hurts!" complained Finch. "Wait till I git my boot off. Ow! Wow!"

"Serves you right!" snapped Carlton. "I ought to have finished you, you dirty sneak!" He stood undecided for a moment, swayed between humanity and inhumanity, but generosity won. "Let me see that leg. Humph. Flesh-wound. Too bad it didn't drill your head! Cut away those dirty clothes and give it a wash. Lick it if you have to. Now take my bandanna and bind it. I ought to ram the thing down your sneaking throat! Confound you, why didn't you fight like a man? Are you just plain dog? What's the idea in trying to kill me, anyhow? Or are you just trying to scare me out of the valley. Speak!"

Finch quit binding the red wound for a second and looked up with the old expression of vague reproach and wonderment.

"You pizened them hosses!" came his mournful, regretful answer.

"You lie!"

"'Tain't fair," whined Finch, ignoring the outburst. "The first time, I let it pass. 'Youth will have its fling,' sez I; so I let it go. Next time, eight yearlin's was found daid; so I calc'lated I'd speak to you friendly. You only told me to git off'n your ranch." This was with reproach unutterable. "'Twarn't neighborly. I let that go at last, because I sez, 'Time heals all wounds,' sez I. Then six four-year-olds died las' week, an' las' night ten mewls went." And he nodded his head sadly at thought of his wrongs.

"You lie!" blurted Carlton. "You lie! I'm not poisoning horses!"

"You sez one day as haow you'd git water ef you hed to clean out me an' that stock," accused Finch most regretfully. "I was right sorry. 'Peared that neighbors ought to git along. I was right hurt about it. Ouch!" The last was addressed to the leg.

The monotonous insistence of that querulous voice was beginning to get in its work. Carlton somehow felt himself on the defensive, and it maddened him.

"You sniveling old crook!" he growled. "You know what's the trouble as well as I do!"

Finch shrugged a tired shoulder.

"I'm right sorry abaout that water," he sighed. "Seems jest like it's only come to make trouble between good neighbors. Ef I could send that stock back, I'd do it, but I hain't got the money right naow. I'm right sorry." He wagged a mournful head, but his calculating little eyes rolled up suddenly. "Mebbe you'd like to sell your ranch back. Heh?"

NOTING the look of cupidity in that foxy face, Carlton reversed the pistol and weighed the butt in his hand as if wondering how deeply it could crash into that mournful, drooling, crooked head. But he took it out in wondering. Finch seemed to keep the engineer's temper just at the border-line of murder, but Carlton couldn't cross the line. He was angered, perplexed and baffled. At length, to save his own sanity, he gave it up.

"Can you walk?" he snarled.

"I—I might make it," said Finch, screwing up his face dubiously. "My hoss is right yonder on t'other side of that brown rock."

"Your getaway was well arranged," observed Carlton dryly. "Do you murder many people in this way?"

"You pizened them hosses," reiterated Finch in the same regretful voice. "I was right sorry abaout it, but——"

"Shut up!" screamed Carlton. "You say one more word, and I'll blow your head off!"

Hypnotized though he was by that soft, sighing voice, an overdose of it broke the spell, and, now that he had cast off the numbing influence, he resolved to keep the upper hand. He knew he was just impulsive enough to make good his threat, and he sought an excuse. He longed for an excuse. But it never came. And then Carlton wondered what to do with the man. He couldn't shoot him in cold blood. He couldn't kick a wounded man down the hill. He couldn't keep him on the hilltop all night, and he couldn't take him home. In a more civilized land he might have Finch arrested, but that seemed out of the question.

"Confound it!" puzzled the engineer.

Finch seemed about to speak. Carlton's face showed a queer smile. Finch sensed he was very near to eternity. He clamped his jaw and looked away. Carlton teetered on his toes and then made his decision.

"Stand up and hop!" ordered the engineer.

Finch uncoiled his lanky frame and hopped. Carlton helped him toward a horse that whinnied from the shadow of a

hot granite pillar, and half-shoved, half-kicked him into the saddle, while Finch yelped with pain. When the job was completed, Carlton, who had put the pistol into its holster, produced it again.

"Travel!" he ordered sternly. "Git! Vamose! And if you ever start anything with me again, I'll shoot on sight! Now vanish!"

Finch shook his doleful head, gathered the reins, clucked dismally and started down the rocky hillside toward the green valley below. Carlton stood and watched until the figure was far down into the lower reaches. A dozen clever and snappy remarks came to his head now, and yet in Finch's reproachful and nonresistant presence he knew his brain had bogged down as usual—and now he had let the cold-blooded old assassin go! The thought made him angry with himself.

He turned his face away from the pitiless glare of the setting sun and looked down the eastern side of the ridge into his little garden of Eden. The western country was gaunt and godless, gray and yellow, dancing in the blur of the purple heat-wave. The valley was different. Pines clustered in cool little groves under the side of the copper mountain, and their tiny springs gave verdure to the ground immediately beneath him.

Far away the ranch-house and barns and coops of Ebenezer Finch stood like toys placed on a carpet of green, with yellow haystacks here and there and peaceful animals grazing. But somehow the nearer lands at the lower end of the valley looked yellower, as if lacking something. A little verdant spot stood alongside Carlton's tiny white house, almost beneath him, but that was from a trickling spring used mostly for drinking-water. He contemplated the place for a long time; then he turned away.

"No water, little money and no friends except one rip-snorting old saloon-keeper. What am I going to do?" he asked of the vast silence that seemed to mock him from the treeless west.

He looked downward to the gaunt foothills and their mystic purple ravines and gulches, spread before him for miles, inhospitable and inscrutable, as if enchanted by demons. This was the unmerciful world outside the gates of his home, and his fate seemed to be driving him toward it. He could not leave the country for good. He knew his disease, even though he was conquering it. The doctors had specified the desert for him, and the desert it must be.

It was only a question of happiness in the valley of his dreams or unhappiness in the treeless, waterless plains below. Standing on the mountain-top and looking into the sinister western lands, the engineer saw his problem as plainly as if it were written in two words: yes or no.

"No!" he resolved. "Never! If I have to, I'll kill him! This is my home, and mine she'll stay!"

There was a new swing to Carlton's shoulders as he ambled down the mountain-side later. He trudged toward the lowlands and past a detached grove of pines, whistling in spite of the heat. The shadows of late afternoon were dimming the sunlight, and soon the air would be cooler. Supper seemed to be ready in the little white-painted, two-story cottage. A wisp of smoke curled from its chimney.

Suddenly the man noticed a flash of blue and white coming around the corner of the house and running toward him. The figure seemed agitated. Slightly alarmed, he gained speed until he vaulted the little fence that bounded his truck-garden, where his brown-eyed wife met him.

"Harry!" she cried, clutching at him.

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know. What is it? The horse galloped in a long time ago with an empty saddle!" She was almost breathless, and her eyes showed the strain she had undergone. "I thought of all sorts of horrible things. Then Finch rode by with his leg bound up. I called, but he wouldn't stop; so I stopped him."

"How?"

Her eyes snapped sternly.

"I took down that rifle over the mantel and pointed it at him!"

"Great Scott! What did he do?"

"Oh, he grinned like an old wolf and put up his hands. He said, 'You're larnin', ma'am,' and I said he would, too. Then he said, 'Birds of a feather flock together' and chuckled. I'd forgotten to cock the hammer of the rifle; so I pulled it back with my thumb. The gun nearly went off. It was awful!" She took a long, shuddering breath. "I asked him where you were, and he said he didn't know. He seemed more polite. Maybe that clicking sound

did it. He insisted he hadn't seen you; so at last I had to let him go. He just left. Then I really became worried."

The engineer's brows were furrowed.

"What a liar he is!" he exclaimed irritably. "It's like—like coping with an eel. Did he say anything else—make any threats?"

"N-no." She seemed hesitant, as if loath to alarm him. "He said something about 'widow's weeds,' but I didn't quite catch it. Nothing else much. His talk seemed to be rambling. He said his best horse died last night and a friend named Jim Black was coming over to 'dicker' about some land. He said Black had advised him not to sell you the ranch but he took a chance on you and now he's sorry. That's about all, I guess."

"All?" gasped Carlton.

The news made him wonder if the odds against him were not too great. Black had a reputation.

THE man belonged to the second oldest profession in the world. Back in the shadowy ages of antiquity the kings of a legendary Egypt employed his predecessors to do their bidding. Cambyses, Claudius and Nero used them lavishly. The Byzantine emperors posted them on every street corner, and the age of the Borgias lifted their craftsmanship almost into the arts. From there they slowly declined in numbers and power until today they are found only in the toughest wards of the big cities or on the last frontiers.

"Silent Jim" Black was a professional killer.

This rough-and-ready section of the country whispered about Black but could prove nothing. He never harmed any one except in self-defense, cleverly arranged. He was not a fire-eater. It was not even proven that he could be hired to kill. It was only apparent that often, when two men got into a quarrel, one of them was likely to run against Jim Black. After the funeral Black seemed a mite more prosperous, but that might be coincidence.

The engineer's wife felt there was something wrong. She read it in her husband's face.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "Is Black a dangerous man?"

Carlton played the game and put his arm about her. He had no intention of causing alarm. Things were bad enough as they were.

"Oh, no," he reassured her. "Black is one of the most suave and courteous persons in the country."

"But what is he doing with Finch?"

"I don't know. Maybe I'll find out," he replied with hidden sarcasm. "Never mind that. Let's get supper."

The wife sensed there was some cruel play going on around her, but her Eastern-trained mind could not gage it. Later, as the days passed, the mystery became a torment, equal to the question of the poisoned horses. Her husband daily seemed more nervous and worried. Once, when Finch happened by, Carlton hurried inside and stood by his rifle. Again, when Finch and a black-clad stranger rode about the former's ranch, the engineer lay under a pine tree and with field-glasses watched them until the tour was over.

Later, when the dark stranger rode by alone and tossed a casual nod toward the house, Carlton's face went white, and he kept his hand near a holster behind the doorway. When Jim Black failed to make the slightest hostile sign, the engineer felt like a fool.

That episode made things worse. At times Carlton wondered if he were not a mite too scary. The engineer did not know what to think; so he puzzled and worried until at length the strain and irritation began to tell on him. Then his wife caught the infection.

To cap the climax, Ebenezer Finch began to resume his visits when Carlton was too far afield to forestall him. First he came to "borry" something, just as if nothing had happened. Later he called to bewail the loss of a prime white mare and twelve mules by poison. The visits kept the young woman exasperated and nervous, though she felt that was what he aimed for. It looked like part of his campaign of terrorism. She sensed that his evasive, whining, wiseacre speech covered something sinister and that he was watching, watching like a coiled snake biding its time to strike.

"I can't stand it any longer!" she blurted one October evening when she and Carlton were seated on the steps of their narrow little porch.

"I know," nodded the engineer, as he puffed at his forbidden pipe and watched

the fading sunlight weave its red brocades over the copper mountain. "Neither can I."

"And yet," she hesitated, "it's glorious." She sniffed the cooling October air, scented from the pines and the dry grass and the near-by rose-bushes. "Finch offered eight hundred dollars for the land," she concluded paradoxically. "Then he offered a little more."

"It cost us eight thousand," he stated. "Would you like to give it up?"

"No. And yet—can we stay?"

He took the pipe from his mouth and seemed to be watching a humming-bird as it studied a new honeysuckle vine.

"Maybe not," he admitted. "If it wasn't for the confounded mysteries, maybe we could. Who's been poisoning those horses?"

"Perhaps they were not poisoned at all."

"They were! I've seen the dead animals."

"Well, then they were," she sighed. "I give it up. What can we do about it?"

"I've got a plan. I've been thinking it over. We'll go to town for a while. I'll come and farm the place at odd times and hire a few huskies to relieve me in guarding it." The engineer was really contemplating an offensive war, but of this he said nothing. "In that way," he explained, "we can run the ranch and get away from this mystery."

"For how long? Have we money enough?"

"I guess so. Maybe I can do a little land-surveying outside. Anyhow, the change will do us good. How about it?"

"But how can we leave with Finch watching us?"

"That's easy. We'll get things packed quietly and wait till he starts out some morning for supplies. He'll leave Abe Bilger, that half-witted hired man of his, to guard the place. We'll let him get well started, and then we'll follow on."

They discussed it all evening, measuring things from every angle, but they had decided beforehand. They had come to realize that their single-handed battle was a little too much for them at present. They needed a respite. Thus it happened that next day the wife got things in order, and then they awaited the passing of Finch. Black had disappeared from the scene and almost from their minds.

Two weeks later Finch went by with empty saddle-bags and grain-sacks dangling from his horse's sides. He saw the glint of Carlton's ready gun and kept at a respectful distance. After he left the valley, the engineer cautiously mounted the ridge to make sure it was not some ruse, but Finch kept on, past cliffs and foot-hills, till at length his dust faded in the far white distance of the alkaline plains. Then Carlton descended to his home.

"It's after nine o'clock," he announced. "Let's hurry."

They took two saddle-horses and a pack-mule, loading them carefully. They did not want their departure to appear permanent. Then, with everything ready, they trotted down the little lane and toward the pass that led out of their valley of dreams.

Once, at the gap, they halted for a moment, and the wife looked back, wondering if it were for the last time. The gentle October sunlight glorified fields, pine-groves, oaks and willows, and the cool breeze brought the gracious scent of pine to their nostrils, while the old copper mountain gave them benediction from above. A meadow-lark sang them a little song. A bee hummed by. The girl's eyes moistened from a queer homesickness, but she turned her horse resolutely and started onward.

III

THEY arrived at the settlement before dusk, meeting only a few cattlemen or prospectors on the way. Carlton took his wife to the ramshackle hotel for the time and then swung past the seven saloons of the "street" to where the porch of Dolan's dance-hall and general merchandise store jutted into a turn of the road.

A pianist was practising for the evening's noise, and the quavery banging floated out of many windows, past the dozen loungers squatted on the wide porch or leaning against hitching-posts as they performed their evening task of watching the darkness arrive. Inside another dozen was gathered about the bar near the wide door. Dolan's heavy bass voice floated out, giving directions about trimming the lamps. When Carlton ambled in, Dolan, in shirt-sleeves as usual, dropped a rag and grabbed his hand.

"Well!" he roared. "You still on earth?

How goes it?" He pulled Carlton forward as if he were a doll. "Come back to a table and have a drink. Not drinkin' today, hey? Well, have a drink anyhow!" And with great gusto he yanked the engineer toward a seat near a window in the rear room, while the hangers-on laughed.

Dolan's attitude changed when he had Carlton seated in the corner. He muffled his voice somewhat.

"You darned fool!" he rasped. "What did you come here for?"

"Why? What's the matter?"

"Matter? Huh—if Jim Black sees you—good night! He's after you!"

The engineer felt his heart thump strangely. He pondered a moment; then:

"Why should he be seeking me now?"

"He needs money. He gits it from Fitch—provided. See?"

"Provided!" gulped Carlton. "Provided he does the work, that is. I see." He stopped and tried to figure it all out. "Then, if I go, Black gets the ranch. I see. That's about what Finch hinted one day when he met my wife."

"Then he lied as usual," contradicted Dolan.

"How?"

"Huh. Think Finch wants Black for a neighbor? Nix. Not. *Nein!* Too dangerous! Black gits cash!"

The more Carlton studied the transaction, the less natural it seemed. That sort of business might be all right for the old thugs of India or the mandarins of China, but the thought of paid assassination in the civilized year of 1903 in the State of California seemed like a strain on the imagination. Though Dolan's bailiwick was in the wildest and most lawless section of a go-as-you-please county, it took only three days to reach the railroad, and then the big modern cities were in easy reach. Even here their influence was felt. Dolan was thinking of installing a telephone!

"It's nonsense!" blurted the engineer. "It's a plot to scare me out!"

Carlton looked at the saloon-keeper queerly for an instant. Dolan had tried to alarm him. Might it be—could it be—that Dolan was also in the plot? Anything seemed possible. Did this saloon-keeper size him up for a tenderfoot after all—just another "sucker" to be trimmed? Carlton was not naturally suspicious, but he was not wholly well yet, and of late he had been filled with many perplexities.

"Sure, it's a plot," said Dolan tiredly. "If they skeer you out, so much the better. If not, you git out anyhow. See? That's where Black comes in. Finch means business. You hit him with a rail. His hosses are pizened. You shot him, I hear. He's mad. Before that it wasn't personal. You was only another sucker. Now it's pers'nal. See?"

"But," argued Carlton, "Black was in the valley several times. He didn't start anything."

"Why should he? No witnesses there. He couldn't prove self-defense. Your wife was always around. It has to be public. See?"

The engineer found his throat welling and his fingers drumming on the table nervously. The lamps of the dance-hall were being hung, but he only saw them as glassy blurs. He knew his face was white, but he was able to meet Dolan's shrewd gaze unflinchingly. There was even defiance in his eyes. The big man nodded.

"Are—are you sure of all this?" insisted the groping Carlton.

"Certain. Finch came in several weeks ago. Drank too much of Looey Burns' snake-juice." Dolan jerked his finger in the direction of a rival sin-palace. "He told Looey about his friend Black. Said Black was likely to git somebody soon. Said it was all fixed. Said there'd be one less pest in Lost Deer Valley. That meant you. Then he went to sleep under a table. Forgot all about it. Looey told me next evenin'. Perfesh'nul courtesy between saloon-owners. Yes, I said courtesy. We have to keep tabs on people. A man's credit may be no good. If he hangs around too long, he'll bust you. It's business."

Carlton began to see into things he had never dreamed of. He had stumbled upon a regular, coordinated information-bureau!

"Then who has been poisoning Finch's horses?" he demanded.

"I don't know," admitted Dolan. "I got my suspicions, but I ain't sure yet. Why the devil didn't you stay away and gimme time to work things out?" The boss scratched his head. "Now Finch is in town. Black's here. You're here. It's all mixed up. The devil only knows how it's comin' out!"

"Well," announced Carlton, "I'm not going to run, anyhow."

"No; only, lay low. No use to look for trouble. Black's deadly. Lay low."

With this kindly admonition the giant started to get up and go about his business, but something in Carlton's face arrested him. The engineer, two shades paler, was looking at something far past the boss. Dolan turned and peered around.

BEYOND the loafers at the bar, beyond the wide doorway, beyond the hitching-posts and the dusty roadway, the dark, immaculate figure of Jim Black was seen passing a small knot of men and ambling toward Dolan's door. He stopped and nodded to some one; then he sauntered onward. Carlton had hold of his chair and was staring as if fascinated.

"Lay low!" advised Dolan. "Sit tight! It might not come now anyhow."

But Carlton's jaw was set at last, and he started to arise. He had come to the end of the road. The long siege of worry and doubt and fear and nervous tension had caused something to snap within him, and, though his teeth were chattering, he had cast the die. He was afraid—scared blue—but going forward. The eyes of the tough old boss showed an admiring glint, and he resolved to save this man from the results of his own stubborn courage.

"Sit down!" ordered Dolan.

"I won't!"

"You will!" snapped the boss, laying a mighty hand on his shoulder. "Nix on this hero stuff! Lay low!"

Carlton's eyes were suddenly hard and cold.

"Let go of me!" he demanded. "Get out of my way!"

The boss hesitated only for an instant. Then he grabbed the engineer's right arm and twisted it as if in a vise.

"Don't speak to me like that!" he snarled. "Who do you think you are? Come on, you! You're goin' into that linen-closet!" And he grabbed Carlton by the scruff of his neck.

"What?" exploded the outraged engineer, savagely angry at last. "Why, you ——"

"Shut up!" roared the saloon-keeper.

Suddenly the crowd outside the front door jumped. They scattered pell-mell. Two men, in the semigloom, rushed around an outside corner and cowered behind the wall of the building. Another yelled and got behind a hitching-post. Sudden shouts and the scuffle of feet told of an instantaneous crisis outside. People were rushing to get out of line from something. Dolan knew the symptoms and halted, undecided.

A pistol cracked outside the window that faced the side road. A piercing cry was heard—then another shot. Then silence—the queer, deathly silence that follows a tragedy.

The bystanders started running forward, away from the saloon. Dolan rushed to the side window, drawing Carlton with him. The boss peered out to the roadway. In front of an old blacksmith-shop opposite, a prone figure was lying, face forward, with arms outstretched grotesquely. Another figure was sitting near by, sagging forward and nursing a shoulder. Men came running up from every direction.

"It's done!" grunted Dolan, releasing the engineer.

"What is?"

The old boss pointed a pudgy finger toward the prone figure.

"Know who that is?" he asked.

The engineer looked closer.

"It's Ebenezer Finch!" he cried, almost unbelieving.

"Right. Finch it is. Died game, anyhow. He shot back. Cornered, I guess. Had to be game. Know the other feller?"

The bewildered engineer looked long and hard. He had seen that middle-sized figure somewhere but couldn't quite place him.

"That's Tom Fulton," announced the boss.

"Fulton. Fulton? You mean the man that used to own my ranch? Never met him. And yet he seems familiar, at that."

Jim Black was lifting the suffering man, but Black was an afterthought.

"Sure you seen Fulton!" boomed Dolan's voice. "Remember the day you was here last? 'Member the coot that came in full of licker? Wanted to lick all creation? Got thrown out? That was Fulton."

Carlton began to grope. There was something underneath it all, but he could not grasp it. Dolan suddenly appeared as satisfied as a cat full of cream.

"This here tragedy cost me about twenty dollars," announced the big saloon-keeper quite casually.

Carlton became even more befuddled.

"Twenty? How?" he asked.

"Keepin' Fulton full of Dutch courage," replied the amiable old thug. "He used to own your ranch. Got froze out like you. Woke up too late. Swore he'd kill Finch. Didn't make good. Got sick, went broke and drifted away. I forgot all about it. He didn't. Came back here after five years. Worked up his courage with licker. Tried to git himself up to the killin'-point. Got too noisy, and I threw him out.

"Then you reminded me who he was. You told me who'd owned your ranch before you. You mentioned Tom Fulton. Then I knew him. After you left, I went after him. I sort of have it in for Finch myself. Fulton told me all his troubles. Got sympathy. Also licker. Buckets of it. Got more courage every day. Waited for Finch. Finch arrived today. Funeral tomorrow."

IV

IT WAS terse and to the point, but Carlton felt his hair curling. This broad-shouldered, black-haired giant in front of him had arranged a killing as casually as he would prepare a fishing excursion. He even furnished the bait! The engineer found himself dizzy.

The old boss read his thoughts.

"For the public good," he grunted. "Finch was a pest. Always in trouble. Always snivelin'. Always cheatin'. I've been waitin' for some one to put him out. Now I'm glad he's gone."

So was Carlton, in a way, but his soul had not yet risen to such heights of altruistic manslaughter, and the chills were running down his spine. He was brave enough, but this was different. He changed the subject abruptly.

"Then maybe Fulton poisoned those horses," he surmised.

"Mebbe! He went away mysterious several times. He promised to do somethin' desp'rate. That's about his size—pizenin' dumb animals. Mebbe, if I wanted proof, I could git it, but—what's the use? I don't care a hoot either way."

There was a wealth of scorn in Dolan's voice in commenting upon his tool, and the the engineer realized how masterfully the drunkard had been managed. While Carlton was away in his valley, a little drama had been staged in this rough pine-board colony, with John Barleycorn as a prime actor and himself as beneficiary—and Dolan as stage-manager. Carlton realized that the big boss had mainly told him the truth. He had supplied the shooting because he despised Finch naturally, because of the general public good, because he wanted to see a fight and partially because of Carlton. Then another thought crossed the engineer's mind.

"By the way," he asked, "how about Jim Black? What is he going to do?"

Dolan's reply was prompt.

"Nothin'. Why should he? Finch is dead. The deal's off. This shootin' leaves Black up in the air. Nothin' in it for him, is there? He's got nothin' against you personal, has he?"

"It sounds reasonable," conceded the engineer.

Here in the dusk, with the last faint traces of red in the western sky, it seemed that a great burden was lifted off his shoulders, even though he did not exactly approve of the method. He felt that his life seemed clear from now on and he could live forever with his bride in the valley of his heart's delight, with the old copper mountain giving them benediction to the end. With his heart swelling, the engineer turned away from the wrinkled face of the sordid, crafty, loyal old thug who had befriended him. He absently looked outside to where groups of men stood about the actors in the pitiful tragedy. And then his dreams vanished.

The crowd in front of Finch had thinned slightly, and the glimmer of a lantern showed his head being raised on Jim Black's knee while another man was sponging his hair, where a dark stream was flowing from above the ear.

Finch's face was almost demoniac as the lantern cast its lights and shadows upon the sharp features, and from his mouth there issued a volley of profanity that seemed to flicker the light with its blasts. Nearer, another group was putting Tom Fulton on a shutter, lifting him with rough tenderness. Beyond the groups of men, lights from Looey's place and the other saloons down the street gave vague illumination to the roadway, while the music of a tinny piano jangled from one of them, playing a "coon song" as if nothing had happened. But above all came that high-pitched jabber of Ebenezer Finch, very much alive. It was not soft and regretful now; it was

explosive. Among other things it shrieked "Gimme my gun!" and "Lemme at him!"

"No!" came the voice of Jim Black during a silence. "Stop that! Wait till you get 'tended to!"

A murmur of voices followed, broken by another shrieking volley of wildcat profanity, but the writhing form of the wounded Tom Fulton had been carried out of sight, and Finch had not seen him.

Carlton, noting with interest that Finch had taken on another feud, felt queerly like a front-seat spectator in a show arranged for his benefit as he looked out of the window. Dolan, standing alongside him, seemed angry.

"——!" boomed the heavy voice of the boss at length in infinite disgust. "Rotten job! Rotten!" And that was all he could say.

A prospector came through the talking crowd at Dolan's doorway and approached the boss, bringing news.

"Didja see it?" he chirped. "A fella named Fulton met old Finch in the roadway and cussed him out. He 'peared to be drunk. He reached for his gun, an' so did Finch. Finch shot him in the shoulder, an' he shot Finch in the head. They was so close they jest couldn't miss!"

"Huh. What was the trouble?" asked Dolan innocently.

The prospector's face looked perplexed. "Darned if I know," he answered. "Mebbe it's some one that Finch skinned."

"How?" asked the boss.

"I don't know," answered the puzzled prospector. "Somethin' was said about a ranch, but that was all I got."

The desert-rat seemed aggrieved about it. After a long, lonely trip through unlimited wastes, where he and his burro had probably suffered all sorts of hardships, he had witnessed a bang-up fight and didn't understand all about the matter, thus feeling deprived of something. He did not know Fulton. Few did. The male population drifted in and out continually—and five years is a long time. Men did not generally know each other very well in this country.

"Is Finch hurt bad?" asked the boss.

"I dunno. Somebody went after Doc Davis, and mebbe we'll see. There's the old doc now." And the prospector ran away to keep tab on the latest developments.

A stocky man with a warty face and a bulbous nose ambled gravely toward the recumbent Finch. The crowd made way for him as, with gestures of professional interest, the elderly arrival examined the wound and gave a few terse directions to the bystanders. Dan Dolan chuckled.

"It's all right now. Doc Davis has got the case. Finch'll die."

The engineer looked nonplussed.

"Hoss-doctor," explained Dolan. "Good man once, but went wrong. Came from New York. Had troubles. Drowned 'em. Been drownin' 'em ever since. If Finch is hurt bad, he'll die."

SOMEHOW Carlton could not fall into this mood. Dolan might hate like that, but the engineer couldn't. The engineer failed to realize that Dolan looked on Finch as one might look on a snake or any other pest which one did not hate but simply struck on general principles. Without realizing it fully, Dolan, busy with engrossing business and political fights, had despised the old hypocrite for years but never thought much about it until a man he liked became a victim. Now he was taking notice with a vengeance.

"If Davis is loaded enough, he'll operate," added the boss. "That's him. If he's sober, he lets the patient alone. Patient recovers. If he's full, he wants to show off. Tackles anything. He'd operate on the Angel Gabriel!" And Dolan's calculating gaze went to the bottles stacked behind his busy bar.

"Don't!" advised Carlton. "Isn't there any other doctor around here?"

Dolan looked a little disappointed at this squeamishness.

"Nope," he replied tersely. "There's three at the county-seat. None here but Davis. No use to bring in another doctor. Finch ain't worth it."

The engineer felt properly rebuked.

"Well," he decided cautiously, "anyhow, maybe it's best to be neutral. Let 'em alone. Let Davis kill or cure. That makes it a sporting proposition."

Carlton calculated that the sporting element would appeal to Dolan, and it did.

"Fair enough," acceded the boss. "I'll bet you ten he dies."

"Done!"

A glance through the window showed that Finch had been carried somewhere out of sight. The side street was deserted

again except for its tethered horses and the jangle of piano music. It was just as if nothing had happened. Dolan and Carlton ambled toward the front of the place, getting out of the way for the dance about to start. A few tired-looking girls had appeared long before and mingled with the crowd of prospectors, miners, ranchers and cattlemen from every part of the hills. A piano, a fiddle and a bass-drum had been tuning up. The board walls were beginning to rattle at the noise, and pictures of actresses, culled from the sporting journals, were vibrating.

The portly Doctor Davis came in at length, strutting importantly at the head of a retinue. Dolan's practised eye estimated he was half-sober, while those at the bar plied the medical man with questions.

"All he needs is a little time and nursing," announced the professional man. "The bullet struck the temporal bone, went along the screamous portion, glanced off the more peetreus tracts and avoided the mastoid, making a welt, a track or what might be called a crease. Except for possible concussion, gen'lemen, I doubt that any material complications can occur. He is resting easy at the hotel."

Ed Hendry, from the Willow Creek country, leaned his tall frame against the bar and voiced his curiosity loudly.

"What made him yell like a wildcat when he came to?"

"Delirum," responded the doctor courteously. "Perfectly natural. Any one gets twisted around after a blow like that. Why, one-half an inch more and he'd have been dead!"

"Huh. That's the first time Finch ever let himself out!" commented the rancher. "He usu'lly snivels. Did he git over it?"

"He's calmed down now," admitted the doctor. "Friend of yours?"

"No!" snapped Hendry.

"Ah," said the horse-doctor, changing the subject tactfully. "Bartender, set 'em up. Your pleasure, gen'lemen, every one!"

But Dan Dolan was loyal to his bet.

"No!" he countermanded. "No drinks for the doc! Everybody but the doctor!"

The crowd turned. The insulted veterinarian sputtered.

"Why?" he demanded.

"No drinks till Finch is out of danger!"

Hendry, the Willow Creek rancher, turned around and faced Dolan.

"Is Finch a friend of yours?" he interposed very quietly.

The boss bristled.

"What's it to you?"

The rancher's face whitened, but he faced Dolan without flinching.

"Then you're through!" he flared. "I knew Finch in Escalante. If you're a friend of his, you're a low-down, sneakin', lyin', hoss-stealin' skunk that a decent rattlesnake wouldn't be seen in company with! Why, you ——"

The boss could not hesitate before an audience like this. It was a matter of prestige, decided instantly. The mighty fist of Dan Dolan crashed into Hendry's face and whirled him backward into the horse-doctor. The smack sounded like an ax hitting a tree. The rancher and the medical man rolled to the sawdust together.

The crowd parted as if by magic. Dolan stood alone, fist clenched, facing the prone man. Two other Willow Creek men sidled in, facing Dolan wrathfully.

"Want some, too?" roared the boss.

One of them grabbed his arm. He did not argue. He shoved the man aside. The other reached downward toward his belt. Quick as light, the giant rushed him and planted a pole-ax blow into his face. That man also fell to the floor.

Some one yelled. The place became tumultuous. Carlton edged toward the boss loyally, but Dolan needed no help. He stooped over quickly and disarmed the man who had reached downward. Then he stood up with a gleaming six-shooter in his hand.

"Any one else want in?" he roared, looking around truculently.

No one volunteered. Some of the crowd even drew back. The boss, satisfied, walked over to the first man he had struck. Ed Hendry of Willow Creek was just coming to. The horse-doctor was fanning him.

"Here!" said the boss, pulling Hendry to his feet. "Git out!"

He led the unresisting man to the door and gave him a gentle shove. Then he returned and picked up the second victim, shook him a bit and helped him to the door also. It had all happened within a minute.

"All right!" cried the boss, waving his hand to the crowd in the dance-hall. "Track's clear! On with the dance! Strike up the music!"

The "music" obeyed with great alacrity.

Carlton had been a silent bystander, and in a way he wondered what this giant might do next. When the boss approached, he was in a thundering black mood. His first remark was wrathful but utterly unexpected.

"Now I'm ag'in Finch for fair!" he announced. "'Tain't your fight alone now. It's mine!"

Carlton was thunderstruck at this attitude.

"How?" he blurted.

"Huh. Finch started all the trouble in the first place, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, now he's lost me three good customers!"

V

HARRY CARLTON did not sleep very well that night. His experiences had brought him into a depressive mood. It was not that he had lost out. It was not that he lacked loyal backing. It was because of his environment and the sordidness of it and a species of homesickness that had come over him. Carlton did not feel above his fellows, but they were different so that the roughness and harshness of this land and its people made him wonder if it were worth while to continue among them, even though his conquered disease demanded it.

The town was a hole-in-the-mud place. The highest ideal of most of its inhabitants was to win enough money at gambling to keep cold drunk. The town was called Mirage. Apt name! It was illusory, unstable, unreliable. Although it had lived forty years, it still had the unpainted, unkempt appearance of a camp that might blow away any minute and was not worth improving.

And Carlton was most worried about his wife. Now that he had her in town, what could he do with her? For the present they had taken quarters at the hotel, made from a defunct dance-hall, where thin board partitions had been nailed to make "rooms." For her there were no women to associate with, no amusement, no little conveniences. The hotel was used mainly by drunks sleeping off their sprees. The place was sordid and makeshift and depressing. The whole atmosphere of the town, for a fine young Eastern girl, was impossible—impossible!

In the sunlight of the next day it seemed even worse. The signs on the cheap board fronts of the cheap board saloons and the Chinese restaurant and the old red blacksmith shop were half obliterated by the hot suns of forty years. Dolan's place, with the windows unwashed and fly-specked, looked dilapidated and sodden and cheerless. Beyond the turn of the road at Dolan's the hot, treeless spurs of gaunt mountains sloped down into unlimited wastes of hot, treeless, waterless plains that seemed to stretch on forever. Carlton began to curse the folly and the illusions that brought him into this country.

Although the engineer did not know it, he was suffering the maladies that come to every secondary pioneer. The first pioneers had come to this land and given their natural wildness full sway, turning it into a free-for-all hell and ignoring its possibilities. Had Carlton understood, he might, like the far-seeing Dolan, have visioned himself clearly as among the first of the new pioneers in this corner of the county—the earnest, decent settlers who within ten years were to transform the old West into the new West and make it a land of prosperous homes, schools, auto roads, giant irrigation systems and clean little towns.

Carlton could not peer ahead and see the great dam with which the Government was to impound waters far in the mountains so that this desert would be forever blessed. As an engineer he knew the possibilities of the country in a vague way, but reality lay in the future. He did not even fully realize that the rest of the county was slowly coming from its long sleep and that only in this section was the last frontier. He only knew he was disgusted and incredibly lonely. He had not been so in his own valley. That was his own.

"You can't stand much of this," he announced to his wife in the morning, as he looked at the bare board walls of his room while the partitions echoed snores from other boudoirs.

"Why not?" she asked.

"Why not? With nothing to do, no place to go, no one to talk to? I ought to have thought of that before we came. Why, it'll kill you!"

"Well, you're here, aren't you?"

It was simply said, but it made Carlton

tingle. The doubts and depressions were swept away instantly as if banished by a fairy hand. The knowledge that he possessed this beautiful girl made him realize that, even though perplexities sprang up on every side, his game was worth playing. And then immediately another distraction made his brows wrinkle. How long could this beautiful young wife go about such a place without complications starting? Carlton knew the general chivalry of the West, but he also knew the free-and-easy attitude of men accustomed to dance-hall girls and the less free-and-easy ideas of certain others who were not accustomed to being balked.

The first complication along these lines came late in the afternoon, when Carlton returned to the hotel after looking over some men who might assist him to hold his little valley. His wife was seated on the veranda, and alongside her was the quiet, well-mannered Jim Black!

Black arose courteously when the engineer arrived, and the engineer seated himself, feeling that Black was just a bit enterprising.

"Mr. Black has just been telling me about Anam and Hue," explained the wife, with a smile.

"What?"

"Anam and Hue and Bangkok and Singapore and a lot of other places. Mr. Black has been all over the Orient!" She said it as if she had made a find.

The engineer's eyes narrowed. He knew from many instances how the East Coast blunts the morals of all but the strongest of men, and he began to appraise Black better. Black was a Westerner, all right, but he did not fit into this settlement. He belonged in some seaport town like San Francisco or Seattle. Yet he had been here for a long time. What was the answer? What was he hiding from?

And Silent Jim had been talkative!

"I'd like to hear of Mr. Black's travels—all of them," said Carlton with malicious courtesy.

Black's cold gray eyes flashed sideways for an instant, but his reply was peaceful.

"Pleased to, some day," he replied, arising. "I'll have to move along now. Got to see a friend. Good day, Mrs. Carlton; good day, Carlton!" And, tipping his hat, he was off.

There was a long period of silence on the porch.

"He's a mystery to me," said the wife at length.

"To every one," grunted Carlton. He produced a pipe and started filling it. "I guess it's best to let him alone," he concluded.

The girl's brown eyes flickered as she considered this.

"Well," she offered, "he seems to be about the best in the camp."

"Maybe. Still, it might be wise to let him alone. I don't trust him."

"Neither do I, exactly," she admitted. "That's why I'm curious about him. There's something—something going on somewhere, and he's in it, and I don't know what it is."

The engineer smiled grimly.

"You mean you want to pump him?"

"I might be able to."

The calm optimism of this innocent young girl made Carlton gulp. He changed his tactics.

"Know what a bobcat is?" he asked suddenly. "It's a lynx—a wildcat. Highly excitable. Well, if you want a real good time, go get a nice lively one, bring it up close to you and then ask it questions. It's no more dangerous than fooling with Jim Black, and you'll get just as much information!"

DAN DOLAN, however, tried it in his own way and got something. He was not really hoping for information, but anything that came into his net was welcome. He and Black happened to get together two days after Carlton came to town, and they sat at Dolan's back-room table, where the boss spun his webs.

"How's Finch gittin' along?" asked Dolan casually, over a glass of beer.

"Dunno," said Black.

"They say he's got eary-sipilis," volunteered the boss. "Pizen. There's dirt in the wound."

Black nodded.

"Bum doctor!" continued the boss.

Black nodded again.

"Doctor prob'ly let dirt git in," offered Dolan. "New doctor comin' from down-country to look him over. Finch'll prob'ly git well."

Black lifted a beer glass to his mouth.

"I wish Finch'd git out of town!" snapped the boss.

"Why?"

"Yells and moans all night. Gittin' worse. Hurts the hotel. People can't sleep. I own a half-interest in the hotel."

Black's eyes flickered at this barbarous commercialism, but still he said nothing.

"That noise must be hard on the Carlton gal," added the boss. "Darned shame. No way to treat a lady like that. Fine gal, ain't she?"

Black nodded again.

"Worth havin'," remarked the boss, looking crafty. "Bet, if there wasn't nothin' in the way, a young feller like you'd take a chance."

Black nodded again. The boss looked at him curiously.

"If an accident hit that Carlton feller, there'd be a scramble, all right," observed the boss very casually. He waited for some remark, but none came. "Best-lookin' filly that ever come to town," he finished.

Black looked wearied. Dolan changed the subject.

"Think Finch may be all right soon?" he asked.

Black sat back in his chair.

"Why do you ask me?" he demanded.

"Oh, I thought you was interested. Saw you stand by him when he was shot. You took him to the hotel."

"Oh."

"If he gits away, then he won't disturb the hotel," said the boss. "Fact is, I'm tired of him. Wish he'd go fer keeps. He's a pest. I'd help put up a purse to plant him, jest for the public good."

Black's gaze became direct and cold.

"Not while I'm here!" he stated.

The boss was taken aback. This man Black was believed to be for hire, and yet here he turned down a bid! The boss knew that Finch would not pay top prices for any job. Dolan could easily beat Finch's bid, and yet Black had turned him down—cold!

"Why?" asked the boss bluntly.

"Friend of mine," snapped Black.

"How?" persisted Dolan.

"Helped me once."

The boss looked curious. He knew that, if Finch lived, Black would probably carry out his lethal contract against the engineer, but here was an angle that was hard to understand. Dolan assumed his most ingratiating air and leaned forward.

"How?" he asked.

Black looked half-defiant, but he let the words come to his mouth.

"Two years ago I was broke. Sister dying in Chicago. Also broke. Only relative I had. Best friend I ever had. Sick and down and out. Pleaded for help. I went crazy. Got desperate. Started out with a gun to collect. New game for me—don't like hold-ups. Caught Finch on the road. Got fifty dollars. I had a mask, but he rec'nized me. I said I had to have the money. He quit yelping and asked me why. I told him. I'd have told any one then. He said, 'Keep the fifty.' Then he took me to his ranch and gave me fifteen hundred dollars."

The boss was staggered. Such a tale about the crooked old miser of Lost Deer Valley was incredible!

"It went to your sister?" gasped Dolan.

"She died happy."

"And Finch loaned it?"

"No. He gave it."

VI

THE boss nearly fell over. The thought of the old miser of Lost Deer Valley giving fifteen hundred dollars to any one was incredible—unthinkable! Black must be lying. If not . . .

Dolan's eyes narrowed at a new thought.

"That was two years ago?" he asked.

Black nodded.

The boss lashed his memory for the episodes of two years back. Black had been present for three years. In the first one he had acquired a big part of his reputation. The boss remembered Black's initial battle, staged right by the bar of this dance-hall. There were a few low-voiced sentences between Black and some cattleman, then a quick reach for guns. When the lightning of Jim Black's pistol had struck, the cattleman was beyond talking forever. What it was all about, nobody ever knew. They only saw that Black had fired in legitimate self-defense, where delay would have been fatal. And then there were other episodes—several of them.

"My fault," apologized the boss, mostly to himself. "I oughta kept better track of things."

Of course Finch had paid Black the money! If Dolan were the most vicious old miser in the county and saw a chance to put under obligations a prize gunman, Dolan might have done the same thing, even though the cost broke his heart. The boss was beginning to see into things he had never dreamed of before. He had known Finch casually, as he knew many others, but that was all.

The wily old boss, however, knew the political line-ups in the county, and he knew of certain things that had happened recently in his vicinity. Certain episodes, for instance, where men with property had vanished. He felt now that Black was implicated in some of them. Also Finch. He put two and two together and made a staggering total, but he was not sure yet. He wished now that he had been less frank in expressing enmity to Finch. He felt that, if apparently neutral, he might have learned more.

But the boss had declared war; so he decided to "stand pat."

"I've got friends, too," said the giant quite frankly. "I'm a good deal like you. If anything happened to some of 'em, I'd be sorry. Darned sorry. Mebbe I'd grieve too much and git excited. Then there'd be regrets all around."

Black's gray eyes showed a flicker, but he arose quite easily and stretched himself.

"That's the way it goes," he nodded. "Well, I'll be going along. Got to see a friend. So long."

The boss understood, and so did Black. The big man now realized that, if it were just an ordinary squabble about that little Lost Deer Valley, things might have been arranged with honor to both sides— but Black had been elusive. It showed that a deliberate program of some sort was being carried out.

Beyond Dolan's doorway stood eighteen horses and mules hitched to a great wagon that drew a trailer almost as large as itself— one of the many counterparts of the "twenty-mule team" now advertised all over the country. Twenty mules were nothing remarkable here. This outfit was one of Dolan's freight-teams that voyaged across the dusty desert miles to the far-away branch-line railroad, bringing in merchandise and mails and taking out the assorted products of small mines and a few scattered ranches. To this equipage Dolan soon made his way, holding an envelope in his hand.

"Do you know Bill Campbell, down at the county-seat?" he asked the driver.

The teamster rolled a quid of tobacco in his hair-hidden mouth and said he wasn't quite sure.

"He's a lawyer," said the boss. "Got an office in that shanty across from the court-house. Tall feller. Good-lookin'. Light hair. Give him this. Savvy?"

"Yeh," responded the teamster, indifferently.

"Paste it in your hat!" roared the boss. "That letter goes. See? Don't forgit it!"

In a land where every one is a free citizen, mandates do not go. A city delivery-man takes orders. A desert freighter is likely to wave a hand to the team and say, "Take 'em." A freighter is a high professional man with a temperament like a grand-opera prima-donna. He knows his own value. This one looked at the boss speculatively for a moment but decided at length to accede to the request. Thus Caleb Snow, teamster, pushed into the desert with the missive in his hat. He started after noon so as to reach by evening a certain water-hole from which he could best start for the rest of the journey. Dolan had a regular schedule for his freight-teams.

THE boss met Carlton the next day in the general merchandise store, where Dolan generally put in a few hours supervising his sallow clerk, a waif he had picked up from nowhere and tried to train into usefulness. The boss stood at the hardware counter while Mrs. Carlton inspected some bolts of cloth at the tiny dry-goods nook.

"Fine gal," opened Dolan to Carlton, pointing with his thumb to the wife.

The engineer agreed with a nod, wondering what was coming next.

"How does she like it here?"

"Oh, so-so."

"Lonely for her," admitted the boss. "How does she like Black?"

"Not much. Why?"

"How long before you can git back to the valley?" asked the boss, ignoring the other's question.

"About two days. As soon as Jerry Martin and Bob Arnold can get ready to go with me. Why?"

"Then take the wife along."

Carlton read a warning in it.

"What's the idea?" he asked.

"Jim Black. Been watchin' him. Finch'll prob'ly git well. Goin' to a hospital down below, mebbe. May git well. Savvy?"

"You mean?"

"I dunno. Not sure. Anyhow, git her out of town. If Black likes her, there's trouble. If not, means trouble anyhow. Mebbe Black might hang around a woman jest to start somethin'. Husband flies off the handle, mebbe. Brings things to a show-down. Savvy?"

"Oh—rats! It sounds too far-fetched!"

The eyes of the old boss narrowed under their heavy brows.

"Sure!" he admitted. "Sounds like melly-drammy. Only, let's suppose things. S'pose you was an old crook. Used a fine valley to trap suckers. Trapped a lot. Then a sucker came along who wouldn't suck. Fought it out. Shot you in the leg. Hit you with a fence-rail. Watched you all the time with field-glasses. And s'pose you had a gunman obliged to you for favors. Then what?" The boss concluded very slowly, making each word tell, "And s'pose you was doin' a lot of other queer business and this young sucker was livin' a mite too close to you?"

"Great Scott!" said Carlton. "But what is this 'other business'?"

"Dunno. Mebbe I'll find out soon. Sent a letter down to the county-seat to a lawyer."

"You? Dealing with a lawyer?"

"Yep. Gotta git information. I work through Bill Campbell. On the quiet. I'm in bad with the county gang down below."

"County gang?"

"Sure. Office-holders. They don't like me. Sheriff came up here once to git a man. The man was innocent. I kicked the sheriff out. The district attorney came. I kicked him out. Deputy sheriffs came. They got kicked out, too."

Carlton visualized the exciting picture.

"Alone?" he asked.

"No; I had a few huskies with me. Held off the whole mob till we compermised. They got the party they wanted. Gave him a legal trial. Freed him, accordin' to agreement. I was made a deputy sheriff. I am yet. They keep outa here. I keep outa there. It works fine. More or less, that is."

The engineer was getting a real insight into the old saloon-man's power. Here in this last frontier, where the armed men of the old West still flourished, Dan Dolan was judge, jury and executioner. The laws of a county and a State were dispensed—or dispensed with—according to agreements made after a free-for-all fight! And yet it seemed in keeping. It was as natural to this country as its sage-brush, its rattlesnakes, its heat and its careless population.

"Huh," commented the engineer, "it must be a fine gang of politicians down at the county-seat!"

"Fine gang is right!" grunted the boss. "Cheap crooks. Held office too long. Think they can git away with anything. Some day they'll wake up! But they let me alone. I'm not in on their deals; they're out of mine. Peace rules—mebbe. Think you'll take the wife back to your ranch?"

"I don't know," considered Carlton. "Maybe I will. I'd like to have her with me, anyhow."

"Got plenty money?"

"Couple of thousand left. I guess I can pull through."

"Plenty more if you want it. Your credit's good with me. Go as far as you like."

"Thanks."

Glad of the backing but not wishing to take advantage of it unless necessary, Carlton was about to join his wife, who looked as if she had heard much of the conversation. She opened her lips to say something just as a husky, excited man in corduroys and blue shirt came clattering through the doorway.

"Hey, Dolan!" he bawled. "Heard the news?"

"No. What?"

"Cale Snow, your teamster, was shot dead at Mesquite Springs!"

VII

THE boss slammed a fist on the counter. In an instant his face was red with wrath. The cords on his bull neck were swollen, while his eyes seemed like lambent flames. The air seemed to be charged with electricity.

"Who did it?" he thundered. "Tell me—quick!"

"I don't know," said the informant. "Bob Lange, he was ridin' by the springs when he——"

"Where's Lange?"

"Guess he's over at Toby's place. He jest got in."

"Go git him!"

The informant jumped out. The boss, occupied with his own sulfuric thoughts, started walking up and down the one aisle of his store, forgetting Carlton and everything else. Dolan's little clerk, who had been writing in a small cage, peered over his desk nervously.

"Gee!" he gulped. "Somebody's in for it!"

Carlton and his wife turned toward him.

"Somebody hurt one of the boss's teamsters before," said the awestricken clerk. "The boss caught the feller that done it and broke him in two. With his hands!"

Dolan happened to look around. The clerk ducked his head again just as two men came through the front door together. One was the informant, and the other was a short, stocky, round-faced man with the bow legs of a seasoned rider. The boss seemed to shoot a question straight into his face:

"Lange, who shot Snow?"

"I dunno."

"Where'd you find him?"

"Right alongside the spring. Under the mesquite."

"Killed?"

"He cashed in about an hour after I arrived."

"When did you git there?"

"This mornin'."

"Where was Aleck Jordan?" This apparently referred to Snow's assistant. Some one usually accompanies every desert-freighter.

"I dunno. No trace of him."

"Ran away! I oughta known it! White-livered skunk! —— me; if I ever see him again he'll run, all right! Where was the team?"

"Right by the wagons, with feed-bags still on 'em. The harness was off. My pardner's bringin' 'em in. We rode up to the wells this mornin', and there was that team with nobody tendin' 'em. That looked queer; so I hollered. Somebody gurgled from the well—you know that little spring under the mesquite—and so I went hootin' over there. Snow was lyin' on his side, with red under his chest. He said 'Dolan.' Then he stopped. After I'd washed him some, he said:

" 'They come up behind me. Last night. Two of 'em. In masks. They made Jordan hop into the desert. Then they took away my money and a letter in my hat.' That was about all. He had a piece of red bandanna in his hand—here it is. From what I gather, they stopped and held him up. Prob'ly they took his gun away. Mebbe he had another under the wagon-seat. He made a break for the wagon, I guess, and then they tried to stop him. There was signs of a struggle by the wheels. Then he must 'a' reached for the other fellow's gun and got plugged. He got some of the mask, though. See it?"

The stranger handed over a piece of red bandanna with an exaggerated fleur-de-lis pattern, torn on two sides. The boss grabbed it savagely with a queer expression on his face. Carlton saw something was coming and turned to his wife.

"Go back to the hotel!" he whispered.

The girl looked curious but thought it best to accede.

The boss was in a storming rage by now. He did not notice her going. He did not notice anything except that piece of red bandanna. He looked at it closely, and then a cruel smile came to his face.

"Where's Tom Yager?" he asked the informant suddenly.

"Over at the hotel. Sleepin' off last night's drunk."

"Where's Axel Yager?"

"I dunno." The informant's eyes turned toward the other man. "Wasn't he over at Looey Burns'?" he asked. "Seems like I seen him a short time ago."

"Yeh," said the other.

"Go over and git him!" ordered Dolan to Lange, the short man. "Tell him I want to see him about them samples from his minin' claim."

The messenger was apparently a trusted friend of Dolan's and ran out willingly. The boss started pacing up and down the aisle again like an angry lion, shaking his shaggy head and clenching his great fists. Carlton kept out of his way.

After a time the messenger returned with another man—a gangling, stoop-shouldered desert-rat with shifty blue eyes and faded overalls hanging by one sweaty gallus. Dolan seemed to control himself instantly

when the newcomer entered. There was a set smile on the boss's face, and he almost purred. The other men got away from him, looking nervous.

"'Lo, Yager," greeted Dolan. "Where you been lately? Ain't seen you much."

The other answered laconically, and his side-shifting eyes showed he was ill at ease.

"Been up to the mine lately?" purred the boss.

"Yeh. A few days ago."

"Where was you yesterday? Wanted to see you."

"Oh, I was around town. Over at Looey's, mostly."

"Where was you last night?"

It came like a whip-lash. The man's eyes shifted again, and he seemed nonplused. He was not quick-witted. He stood there like an oaf, sensing that something was wrong but not knowing just how to reply.

"You was at Mesquite Springs!" thundered the boss.

Carlton caught his breath. The other turned white. He put up his hands as if to fend off something. His jaw drooped, and his eyes twitched.

The boss sprang forward like a tiger.

"I've got you now!" he snarled. "Thought you'd git away with it. With me? With me? Huh!"

DOLAN'S mighty left arm grasped the back of the man's neck. The right hand reached forward. Its muscled fingers clutched the throat and lifted the screeching man off the floor, flinging him backward on to the counter. There was a thud and a squeal. The man's eyes were popping from their sockets, and his face was distorted inhumanly.

"Who told you to do it?" bellowed the boss.

There was a gurgle from the wide mouth that sounded like a stifled shriek. Dolan ran a finger along the throat, under the jaw.

The man squirmed sickishly and flailed his long legs in every direction. Carlton turned away, wondering what to do.

"Who told you to kill Snow?" roared the boss. "Quick! You've only got a second to live!"

Carlton couldn't stand it any longer.

"Don't!" he shouted. "Man alive—don't!"

He dared the ferocious wrath of the boss and laid a hand on the muscled shoulder, trying to pull it away.

"Shut up!" roared Dolan, turning his savage eyes on the engineer. "Git out of my way—quick!" And with one heave of those powerful shoulders he shoved Carlton across the aisle.

Then the boss looked down upon his victim again. This time his voice was very soft and smooth.

"Tell me before I strangle you!"

"Black!" gasped the suffering man.

The boss bared his white teeth in a wolfish smile.

"Jim Black!" he snarled. "I thought so! What for? What did he want? Quick—answer!"

"Money!" choked the other.

The boss ran his finger under the jaw again. The other screeched.

"A letter! A letter! Snow fought. Oh! Leggo me!"

"Was Black there?" insisted the boss.

"No. It was Lige Hackett." This referred to one of the worthless loafers hanging around town.

Carlton had recovered his balance, but he found himself trembling and perspiring as the result of the fiendish scene he was witnessing. Every nerve in his body was tingling. He knew the boss was his friend; he admired Dolan for many things, but here the boss sickened him. Though the man probably deserved this punishment, Dolan's wrath was too inhuman, and Carlton feared—knew—that before his eyes a man's neck was about to be broken. He rushed forward with all his desperate strength and tore at those cruel fingers madly.

"Quit it—quit it!" he pleaded. "Dolan—come out of it! It's murder—murder! You'll be as bad as he is!"

The savage eyes of the boss glared at him for an instant, and Carlton wondered if he, too, were to be a victim; then the giant passed an elbow in front of his eyes. And, when they were cleared again, they were sane.

"Holy smoke!" came the voice of Lange, behind Carlton, in awe at the miracle.

"What the—what do you want me to do?" roared the boss. "Kiss him?"

"No, but don't kill him. You're a deputy sheriff. Why not arrest him?"

The idea seemed to be utterly novel, and

the boss showed quizzical wrinkles about his eyes.

"I might," he ruminated, "but how about that county gang? Think I want them comin' up here? Nix!"

"Well, why not take the prisoner down there?" suggested the engineer.

The faces of the other men showed queer smiles. Dolan also began to grin. The thought of himself descending from his high rookery in the foot-hills to parade a prisoner into the county-seat, before the astonished and nervous gaze of the enemy politicians, struck the boss's sense of humor so that his grin became broad. Carlton did not realize how deep was the line of demarcation between the county's office-holders and the lord of this foot-hill settlement.

The engineer could not know of all the tricks started by the politicians down below with the purpose of "getting" Dolan for past disfavors; neither did he ken of certain crafty efforts to compel a willing but timorous Board of Supervisors to cancel Dolan's county liquor license. Carlton was blithely stepping into the history of fifteen years of red feud between Dolan, with his axes to grind, and the politicians, with their axes to grind—but he did not know it. Dolan did.

"No," said the boss. "Better leave well enough alone. I'll arrest this man and let some one else take him into town." He turned to the prisoner. "Hey, you—you're 'rested! Git that? You make a move, and I'll ram your heels into the back of your throat!" The sight of the lout seemed to make Dolan's temper rise again. "What did Black give you for the job?" he roared suddenly.

The other shuffled his feet.

"Nawthin'," he muttered.

"What? Nothin'?" The boss reached out his hand again. "Quit that lyin', or I'll strangle you again!"

The other flinched.

"No!" he cried, anxious to appease and now hasty with explanations. "Black didn't give me nothin'. It was Finch. A long time ago. Finch grub-staked me four times. He gits his supplies from the Yampa mine-freighters; so nobody knew about it. Then he called the debt. He sez he didn't want my mine. Sez he wanted pers'nal service. Later on he sez fer me to join Black when Black wanted me. Then Black wanted me." The man gulped. "I didn't intend to do it, but Black sez it was easy. An' then Snow started scrappin', and—things happened!"

"Yeh," said Dolan bitterly. "I git you. I'm gettin' a lot of things! How long ago did Finch call the loan?"

"Oh, six months ago."

The boss seemed to ponder for some time, looking at the floor. Suddenly he grabbed the man, searched him, swept him into a little bare cubby-hole in the back of the store, locked the padlock, stormed through the door into the dance-hall, took a sawed-off shotgun from behind the bar, examined it and then strode outside.

It all happened so quickly that it left no time for remarks from the others, and Dolan seemed to invite none. When it was over, the two men looked at Carlton and grinned.

"Phew!" said the bow-legged Lange. "He's started now!"

"Yeh," agreed the other. "Goin' after Lige Hackett, the pal—or mebbe Jim Black."

"Think we'd better follow him?" suggested Carlton.

"Not on your life! Don't butt in!" The man mopped his face with a bandanna. "Let's have a drink," he offered.

The engineer felt he needed something just then; so they ambled up to the scarred old mahogany bar.

MIKE, the bartender, served them offhandedly. He was telling some history to a few cattlemen and could not stop his talk even when the boss came for a shotgun. Mike was trained not to interfere with the affairs of others, and thus he had lived happily and gained fat for many years.

"Yessir," said Mike, "this here mahogany bar was once the finest licker-chute in the whole Southwest, bar none. Yessir! She's old and scarred and busted now, but time was when folks used to cross the hull State jest to drink here. That was after Dan Dolan first got known in the country. But he earned it; yessir, he earned it! Why, the things that feller went through to git that forty-foot piece of mahogany here would drive a hull regiment plum starin' crazy! Yessir! Dan Dolan nursed that bar through three hundred an' eighty miles of the dog-gonedest country the devil ever built! Yessir!

"How? Why, he jest pulled her here by the roots! Lemme see—that was about 'seventy-four or five; I forgit which. The boss was jest a kid then—all vim an' go an' muscle an' ginger, fightin' all day an' dancin' all night. There was nothin' to this here town them days—only a few tents an' a few mewls an' a few men an' a few burros. When the boss come, he seen there was goin' to be a lot of prospectors an' ranchers in these parts; so he figgered on gittin' ready for trade. First thing he built was a saloon. Then he figgered on a gen'ral merchandise store, but there wasn't no stock hereabouts for a store; so he went outside to git things.

"In them days there wasn't no branch-line railroad. Only the main line, 'way north. There wasn't no road, only a trail. Well, Dan lit out with twelve mewls an' a big wagon. After he got to the railroad—three hundred an' eighty miles in Winter, gents—he made up his mind that, as long's he'd started business, he'd start right. So along with the other things he orders a gosh-wollopin' bar from Saint Looey and camps down an' waits till she arrives.

"'Bout three months later that bar lopes in on a freight-car. The boss had her set up on the platform, an', when he seen how shiny an' fine she was, with a lot of dewdabs an' dingbats an' fancy scroll-work, there was nothin' on earth could make him take her down again. D'ye think Dan Dolan was goin' to drag jest a lot of boards around? No, sir; no style to that! He wanted to advertise her, and he did. It got so that the hull darned country up there wanted to keep the bar; so he loaded her on to the wagon quiet, pertected the woodwork with sacks, tied her well down and then pulled out fer home, with ten feet of that bar stickin' out of the wagon.

"The boss started from here with ten men. Sort of an escort of honor. He started back with twelve—two volunteers. The men rode on top of the bar, and the wet goods an' merchandise was packed underneath, makin' a neat little cargo. Well, this here parade went along fine till up in the Juniper Mountains some fool emptied his pipe through the vents in the bar. Underneath some licker had got loose; so after the fire was out most of the merchandise was overboard and the bar was considerable black in spots, but still she was there, and that was all the boss wanted.

"There was a bunch of Injuns on the war-path about that time over in western Nevada. They scattered into little war-parties to raise as much —— as possible, and one of these here parties run into Dan an' the bar. The boys lifted the thing off'n the wagon an' made a little fort out of it till the Injuns got de-pressed and lit out—them that was left. The rest is there yet.

"Dan's party was all shot up. Six men was gone; two more was down; seven mewls had drifted to heaven; the bar was full of holes, an' Dan Dolan was ragin' mad. They say it took him two days to cool down. He wanted to chase them Injuns all over Nevada for pluggin' his bar.

"Finally the boss reorg'nized himself, an' they started off again with everything overboard but the bar, seven men an' a few overloaded mewls. The boss had his jaw set then. It looked like luck was tryin' to beat him; so he swore to git that mahogany here if he had to drag it! But, except for an axle or two breakin' here an' there an' gittin' bogged down in the mountains when the rain come, everything went along so-so till they came to Mud Creek.

"A big cloudburst arrived that evenin', sent forty billion gallons of water down Mud Creek all at once, scooped out five thousand acres of Mud Creek Cañon an' sent that bar ten miles down-stream!

"Dolan swore enough bad language to supply the State for twenty years, but still he wouldn't let go of that bar! Three men went down-stream an' was never seen again. Dolan an' three others got the animals to higher ground an' watched the wagon an' bar breeze away at fifty miles per hour, an' still the boss wouldn't give in!

"When daylight come, the waters was down some, an' the boss found his wagon 'way down-stream, draped around a tree that was standin' upside down. The other fellers pried the wagon loose, but the boss kept after that bar. He found her nice polished top grindin' the face off a half-acre granite boulder, but still he'd found her, an' that was what he wanted. Then another trouble came. One of the corner-posts had worked loose an' was gone. That meant tacklin' about twenty thousand acres of swampy ground, lookin' for that post. But he found her, gents. It took three days, but he found her! She's right under my foot now, gents—old style

mahogany and four foot wide—an' that was twenty-five years ago!

"Well, in about a week he had that bar up on the wagon, and they started off again. There was only three of 'em then because one had got too far into the swamp-waters. There was only four mewls; there was nothin' but rope for harness; there was no provisions, no terbacker, no hope—but they still had that bar!

"Well, after livin' on the country—mostly jack-rabbit—this here procession got within a hundred miles of home. The boss was startin' to feel better when up by Sandy Mountain, on the Nevada line, the off hind wheel of the wagon curled up an' quit forever. Jest resigned unanimous. Well, the boss, he sat on a rock an' swore so bad he twisted the tails on the mewls, but do you think that fellow'd quit? No, sir! That bar was comin' into Mirage if he had to bite it into chunks an' bring the pieces in his teeth! Yessir!

"They pried some boards under the axle to make a sling, but, when they tried to start, them four mewls couldn't budge the thing. Sand was up to the hubs, anyhow. There the boss was stuck again; so he breezed out for some more animals. There was a peaceful Injun camp a few miles away where they had a lot of young hosses. The boss tried to dicker, but they couldn't savvy the lingo; so he borried them colts, anyhow.

"WHEN Dan Dolan got them eight wild Injun mustangs hitched to them four mewls an' that wagon, things begun to happen. Yessir! First thing Dan knew, that bar was makin' sixty miles per hour, bumpin' over rocks, boulders an' crags, with the hosses kickin' an' tryin' to go in every direction an' Dan tryin' to hold 'em down. He fell off once an' got dragged. He lost his last terbacker, lost his matches, lost his watch, lost his temper, lost his shirt an' most of his pants, but still he hung on to that bar. One feller got slid off for good, but they wasn't stoppin' jest then fer anything. They jest ripped an' snorted an' rattled an' banged along them trails like a drunken comet!

"They got within fifty miles of here when the outfit struck a chuck-hole. Dan says that was the most gosh-wollopin' chuck-hole ever invented, and she jest happened to be in the wrong place. She was a big crack where the trail quits comin' down-hill, turns quick, an' starts up-hill. Dan's brakes was gone an' them mustangs swept down that hill like a stampede—each animal with his ears back, his eyes wild an' his tail stickin' straight out, humpin' along like greased lightnin', with Dan pullin' an' swearin' like a wild man. When that outfit hit that chuck-hole—bang! Kindlin'-wood!

"Dan came to with a gash in his shoulder, a piece of rope in his hands an' that bar standin' on end, laughin' at him. Then the boss really got mad—so mad he couldn't even swear. But did he give up? No, sir; he was jest startin'!

"The mustangs was gone fer good. Mebbe they was the daddies of that band of wild hosses folks sometimes see up in the Smoke Range country. Also, the mewls was gone. They'd come home a-rampin'. What did Dan do, you say? Why, the boss walked in here with no shirt an' mostly no pants, rested one night an' then collected an outfit the next day for the grand entry. There wasn't many wagons here then. Only one old cart an' some spare wheels. So the boss took that cart, took them wheels, took eight mewls, took three men an' started out to git that bar.

"Yessir, you've guessed it. He used the cart fer the front, put the spare wheels right on to the bar an' sailed her into Mirage one day like he was the King of Spain returning from a victory! Proud? Haughty? Why, all he needed was a nigger to fan him so's he'd look like Cleopatry on that there barge, like the picture over there. Yessir! Half the town's folks was gone; most of the mewls was dead; the bar looked like scrambled eggs, and the boss was all busted up an' caved in—but Dan Dolan got that bar into Mirage! Yessir. She was rebuilt, an' she's right here in front of you. Your pleasure, gents!"

"But," interrupted one of the men, "how did Dolan get the stock to go with the bar?"

"How?" demanded the bartender scornfully. "How? Why, he started right back an' done it all over again with the supplies! That's how he done it! There's some people can be made to quit, gents, but the boss, he belongs to another family. Yessir! Yes—sir!"

Underneath it all, Carlton wondered at the misguided tenacity and misdirected

heroism which would cause a sane man to suffer so nobly for such an utterly worthless cause. And yet, still further underneath—was it worthless? As the voluble old bartender intimated, the incident advertised Dan Dolan and his goods throughout the Southwest and laid the foundations for a power which now seemed to hold this district in the hollow of one mighty hand.

Thus in its last analysis the thing was a masterpiece of business acumen, and yet—the man who had shown such acuteness was probably out now, laying all his brains aside, bringing himself into the gutter with the rest and giving vent to his dangerous passions by committing murder with a shotgun! Carlton was not sure, but he thought he had heard a muffled report from somewhere outside during the bartender's narrative.

The men drank in silence, as if waiting for something to happen. The engineer took a small drop for sociability, then turned and looked outside the door toward the ramshackle street. A shadow crossed Dolan's board walk; then heavy footsteps sounded upon it. The boss strode in with the shotgun still in his hand, looking neither to right nor left. He passed behind the bar, threw the gun open, tossed out an empty shell, blew down the barrel, threw in a fresh cartridge and put the weapon under the bar. After which he wiped his hands on his trousers.

"Well, what happened?" asked Carlton.

"Got him," grunted Dolan.

"Who?" they all chorused.

"Yager's pal. Lige Hackett."

"Dead?" asked the engineer.

"Yeh. He reached for a gun."

It was a calm, easy statement. Carlton couldn't admire that side of his friend. It gave him the chills. Also, there were consequences to consider. Though the old free-and-easy customs were still in effect here, the laws of the State were gaining ground daily and must be reckoned with. And then Carlton remembered that Dolan was "in bad" with certain persons "down below" at the county-seat. And the boss had taken the law into his own hands.

"Well," surmised the engineer slowly, "I suppose we'll have investigations and things. The folks down below will all be up here."

"They will not!" scorned the boss.

"How do you make that out?"

There was the old, shrewd, satisfied expression on Dolan's face that showed he had not laid his brains aside after all.

"Confound it," roared the boss. "Didn't you remind me I was a deputy sheriff? Well, then Hackett died legal. He died resistin' an officer!"

VIII

IT WAS a clincher. The genial old thug was so satisfied about his flawless act of manslaughter that Carlton could only gasp. He felt himself coming under the spell which made the others bestow upon the boss an awe that was tinged with admiration or fear, according to the view-point. In a way the engineer was beginning to be nervous about Dolan. It was like asking water to put out a fire and receiving a cloudburst. Carlton began to wonder how it was all going to end. Then he started wondering how it began.

"Are—are you sure you got the right man?" he asked at length.

"Sure? Why, didn't Axel Yager say Hackett helped to kill Snow?"

"Yes. Yes. I heard that. But how did you know Yager was the right man?"

"Didn't he confess?"

"Yes. But how did you know before that?"

The boss leaned across the bar and spoke very patiently.

"Didn't I tell you once I was a merchant? Yeh. You remember. Well, 'bout twelve years ago I got a lot of bandannas. One set had a floor-de-lee pattern. I sold 'em out years ago, 'ceptin' one. Jest one. I put her away among the old stock. She roosted there for years. Then two weeks ago the Yager brothers came in for a bandanna. I served 'em myself. I was out of the stuff right then; so I dug around. Found that one. Sold it to Tom or Axel, I forgit which. She was the only floor-de-lee in the whole county. The pattern went out years ago. Then Snow got killed. He had hold of that rag. It was Tom or Axel killed him, but I didn't know which. Tom was sleepin' off a long jag; so it was Axel. See? It's simple to guess things when you're a merchant, son!"

Carlton gave in. The boss was too much for him. As a deputy sheriff Dolan had completed a comfortable killing; as a merchant he had tracked down a murderer, and

as a saloon-keeper he had provided for the shooting of Ebenezer Finch. Carlton wondered what other jobs or positions he held.

"Did you meet up with any one else?" asked the engineer, meaning Jim Black.

"No." The face of the boss skewered into perplexed wrinkles again. "Come into the store, Carlton; I want to see you."

The curious engineer followed him back to the environment of barter and sale, and the boss leaned against a pile of blue overalls.

"Black's beat it. What do you make of it all?" asked Dolan, assured of privacy here.

"I don't know," admitted the engineer. "It seems as if one thing has led to another. I know it isn't all about my little valley, anyhow."

"No. That's a side issue. Finch got you in; then somethin' came along bigger than you. Then he wanted you out quick. He tried the old hoss game, but it wouldn't work. Takes too much time, anyhow. So he got Black on your trail. He wanted to git you out quick. Why? I'll tell you. It's because there's somethin' big doin' in this county, and he's got a finger in it. It's crooked, or he'd be out of it. Black's in it, too. Now, what is it, and where's Black gone to?"

"Maybe to the county-seat."

Dolan nodded.

"I think so. Prob'ly lit out as soon's he seen my note to Lawyer Campbell, after Snow died. He must have watched me talkin' to Snow. I gave the letter to Snow, and he seemed careless about it; so I yelled at him. Black must have thought it was important. Mebbe he wanted to know how much I knew. That's how Snow got killed." The boss pondered for a moment. "Funny thing—I didn't know that letter was important myself!"

"What?"

"Naw. I jest took a guess. I was gropin' in the dark. Do you know what was in that note? I jest asked Campbell to look over the county records. Wanted to see how much land Finch or Black owned in this country."

"What got that idea into your head?"

"Because," said the boss, "there's been some funny doin's in this county for the past year, and I didn't pay much 'tention to them, because I had my own troubles. I was asleep at the switch. When you came into the country, you woke me up. I pulled you along because I wanted to see what was doin'. Then I begun to see there was more goin' on than I ever dreamed of. I got to rememberin' backward to certain happenin's where men took up land around here and then blew away. D'ye begin to see?"

Carlton saw. The boss abandoned his choppy language and talked straight, and the engineer was struck between the eyes by the revelation.

"There's been a big land-grabbing deal here, and Finch is in it. I see. But what's the purpose of it? And what is there crooked in that?"

Dolan answered the last question first.

"Nothin'—mebbe. Only, there was a couple of people owed Finch money and disappeared. They was friends of mine. Good friends. They blew away sudden. I didn't know they owed Finch money. I ain't sure yet. I only got rumors long after they went. But if the county records show that Finch has their property——"

The boss closed his fingers into a mighty fist and looked down upon it.

"Savvy? Supposin' there was other folks like that all over the county? How should I know? People come and go. And supposin' there was a lot of prospectors tradin' at the Yampa mine store? Finch owns stock in the Yampa, I hear. Suppose them prospectors had hard luck and ran up bills they couldn't pay? S'pose Finch asked for pers'nal service? Suppose there was a lot of dummy homesteaders in these lands around here? What do you think of it?"

CARLTON did not know what to think. In fact, it was hard to conceive that the drooling old slouch of Lost Deer Valley could amount to so much. The thing looked incongruous. And yet, with Finch in combination with the suave Jim Black, money and unscrupulousness were hand in hand, forming the age-old alliance against which honest men have battled for centuries.

"Why did Black go to the county-seat?" blurted Carlton. "That is, if he went there?"

"I don't know. Mebbe that'll be for you to find out."

"Me?"

"Yes, you. When Black seen what was in that note to Campbell, he streaked out. That's what it looked like, anyhow. So

I'm goin' to send that note to Campbell again, by you. Savvy?"

The engineer thought of his wife, his ranch and all the other elements which claimed his attention.

"But how can I leave here?" he argued.

"Take your wife," grunted Dolan. "The trip'll do her good. Weather's cool now. Take Bob Lange and Phil Johnson with you. Take the pris'ner to the sheriff. I'll deputize you. It might be a good idea for you to git acquainted down below, anyhow."

"Why?"

"Oh, I dunno," said the boss vaguely. "It may come in handy. You're a perfesh'nul man. Helps business. Them two hired men can 'tend to your ranch. No trouble possible now. Finch is sick in bed."

Carlton felt that he was being wafted along in the tide of Dolan's will, playing a part in some larger drama than he suspected, with the boss pulling the strings. And yet he went. Dolan's logic was good, and Carlton was impelled by curiosity to visit the county-seat, anyhow.

Thus on the next morning, with his khaki-clad wife astride a big black horse, Carlton started out at the head of his cavalcade. Under the engineer's khaki Norfolk jacket a short-barreled Colt nestled in a holster. Somewhere in a pocket of the girl's skirt was a little two-barreled derringer, but the other two travelers wore franker weapons, swinging over the hips of their overalls. Only the silent prisoner was unarmed. The party was ready for anything.

But nothing happened. No skulking figures lurked in ambush in the long, sunny vistas of sage-brush and greasewood, nor in the rocks and washed-out cañons of the foot-hills, nor in the miles of mesquite and yucca-palms. Cool winds made the trip easy, and they ambled along as if on a picnic, taking their time and putting up at scattered ranch-houses at night. Even the prisoner caused no trouble. The others were armed and had better horses, and during the rests they stood guard over him.

They arrived at the county-seat late in the morning, heading for the county jail behind the ramshackle old court-house, upon whose top stood a flagpole and a decorative wooden statue of the period of 1870, once chastely attractive but now grimy and lacking a nose and two hands. Horses and buggies went up and down the unpaved main street. Others were alined along the hitching-racks. Wagons arrived with goods from near-by ranches, winding past a Yampa mine freight-team standing in front of a blacksmith shop, with the leaders of its fourteen big mules jingling bells from their collars at every movement.

Cow-punchers rode about the street or loafed among the season's remaining flies where the board sidewalk jutted into the roadway. The dingy old glass fronts of the busy little stores advertised the wares in a way, but the main attractions were sacks of oats and bales of hay lying by each open door and displaying the latest market quotations on signs done crudely in lamp-black.

The whole town was a living contrast. It was dreamy and bustling, civilized and half-savage, modern and bucolic, as if the new West and old West were being introduced to each other here. A prospector, toting many weapons and wearing the long hair of a Buffalo Bill, led his two burros up to a store and mopped his broad-brimmed sombrero.

A man in gray business clothes and a derby hat went past him into the same store. A cow-puncher in white angora "chaps," displaying guns and cartridge-belt, doffed his hat to a schoolma'am in white, while a yelping dog-fight around the corner brought forth denizens from four saloons, including two brisk Eastern commercial travelers and three Indians wearing giddy red blankets.

To Carlton and the girl it seemed like a return to the outside world. They did not realize what hermits they had been in their little valley. Here the roadway had trees—actual umbrella and locust trees, while up above there wasn't a tree for miles, except in Carlton's own valley. Here there was a garden or two, with little white-painted houses nestling among them. The sight made them realize the community feeling they had lacked.

The party registered at the old-fashioned wooden hotel set within wide verandas, and then Carlton and Bob Lange brought the prisoner to the county jail, where the lean-faced, mustached sheriff recovered from his surprize, put the prisoner behind bars and shot a string of questions at Carlton.

The engineer told him a straightforward story about the prisoner's confession but

neglected to speak of the other angles, acting on advice from Dolan. The sheriff finally scratched his head.

"But why did the feller kill Snow?" he asked. "What was the motive?"

"Maybe it was robbery."

"Huh! All a freighter has is a whip an' a chaw of terbacker! Fat chance! I guess Dolan's fell down. Gotta have better motives than that to work on!"

The engineer moved a bit so the light from the window would fall squarely on the sheriff's face. He was about to "spring something," and he wanted to observe every move of the man's expression.

"Snow's murder was ordered by Jim Black!" he announced very quietly.

"Hey?"

The sheriff's face underwent a transformation for only a fraction of an instant, but in that time Carlton learned what he sought. There was some connection between this member of the "county gang" and the mysterious gunman of Mirage!

"Them's strong words, young man!" snapped the sheriff. "It might be hard to prove! 'Course, I don't know this Black very well, but still he's a citizen, and such remarks might land you in a peck o' trouble!"

Carlton shrugged his shoulders.

"I didn't charge it," he retorted. "The prisoner confessed it himself."

"Who to?"

"Dan Dolan."

"Yeh. But how many witnesses?"

"Three."

"Humph." The sheriff seemed to cogitate for some time, looking at the floor. "I guess we'll have to 'vestigate this. You're stayin' at the hotel? All right. You'll be on hand if we want you. See you later."

And with this easy dismissal the sheriff went through the door into the cells, and Carlton and his companion, feeling as if something were wrong somewhere, walked out of the place thoughtfully.

FACING the court-house was a little one-story red-painted office, and a sign over the door bore the legend: "William J. Campbell, Attorney at Law." Carlton headed for this place alone but found it locked. He learned that Campbell would return later; so the engineer went back toward the hotel, which was off the main street. He turned a corner. He passed a cottage and then a big hay-barn. Suddenly a man came around the barn and almost bumped into him. It was Jim Black!

They halted in surprize. The two men appraised each other for a second; then Black decided to speak.

"Howdy!" he said. "What brings you here?"

"Why, I'm just looking around the country."

"Huh. How far have you looked?"

"Far enough."

The gray, calculating eyes of the killer seemed to flash, but there was no overt act. Black merely changed the subject a little.

"Heard you brought in a prisoner," he commented.

"That's correct."

"Who was it?"

"Axel Yager."

Though Carlton watched Black closely, the man did not seem as surprized as he should be. He merely nodded his head.

"Dolan sent you?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I see. Dolan sent you in. Well! Are you aimin' to mix into local politics any?"

The question brought the engineer's quick temper boiling to the surface. Carlton took it for a sneer and resented it. He was sick of this Jim Black person, anyhow. He had lived under a mental strain because of the Jim Black myth that seemed to hold a whole population in awe, and now he had a fascination to reach into that myth and see what it was made of.

"What's it to you?" he flared. "I'll do as I —— please!"

The outburst had an opposite effect to the one expected. Black put his hands in his pockets and seemed to cogitate. Without Carlton knowing it, the other was considering whether to discommode his important affairs just then and entangle with this pesky engineer, with possible embarrassments up-country, or wait till all his present absorbing business affairs were disposed of.

"It's nothing to me," he replied mildly at length. "I was just wonderin'. I thought it'd be better for all hands if you didn't."

"I will be the judge of that!"

"Sure; sure. Go to it. Right to the end of the road. Go to it. Just so!" And, waving an ironic hand, he turned and walked away, leaving the bewildered

engineer standing there and wondering whether Jim Black were overestimated or underestimated.

Campbell was in when Carlton appeared at his office later, and with the attorney was a florid-faced, well-dressed, bald-headed man with shrewd eyes, introduced as Lucius Van Dorn, representing interests "looking into the mines hereabouts."

"I'd like you to take him into your country when you go back," said Campbell. "He wants to look at the Yampa mine and the other properties around there."

The tall, pleasant-faced attorney had read Dolan's terse note and also an enclosure concerning the engineer. When the reading was over, he seemed very thoughtful.

"Tell me all about it," he invited.

Carlton looked at Van Dorn, but the latter seemed thoroughly comfortable in his chair. Campbell caught the glance.

"Go ahead," he said. "Van Dorn's a—friend of mine. He wants to know the general situation up-country, anyhow. I told him it was a tough neighborhood. Maybe you'll make him believe it."

Still a bit wary because of the third person, but accepting Campbell's judgment, Carlton sat down and gave a detailed account of much that had happened since first he went into his little valley. At the end of it Campbell whistled.

"Phew! That's a pretty mess! I can hardly make head or tail of it! I wonder—I wonder if Dolan's intercepted note has anything to do with certain powwows the court-house bunch held last night with some strangers. They kept the lights burning all night. There's something big in the wind, but—hello! Who's there?"

A knock rapped on the door, but before the attorney could open it the sheriff turned the knob and walked in, followed by a chubby deputy. The sheriff wasted no time on formalities.

"Hey!" he bawled to Carlton. "What sort of goin's-on are you havin' up in your country, anyhow? What are you doin'? Puttin' up a game on me?"

"Game?" challenged Carlton, rising from his chair. "What are you talking about?"

"What game?" The sheriff grinned shrewdly. "Why, bringin' down a pris'ner that confessed to murder because he was bein' choked to death! Tell me. Did Dan Dolan strangle this man or not?"

"Dolan tried to get the truth out of him!" snapped Carlton.

"Yeh." Sarcastically. "Truth! Why, if I was choked like that, I'd of confessed to killin' President Lincoln! So would you! Truth! Gosh! And then Dolan has the cold crust to send this man down here as pris'ner on a charge of murder, after Dolan himself killed that Hackett feller with a shotgun! Say!" The sheriff was getting excited. "What—what sort of a slam-bang place have you fellers got up there, anyhow? Ain't there no law or order there at all? Is the whole district jest one floatin' insane asylum? How'd you happen to come into this? How'd you come into cahoots with Dolan?"

"I'm not in cahoots with any one!" rasped Carlton. "Dolan's a friend of mine. Understand? He asked me to take a prisoner down here, and I've done it. If you have anything to say to Dolan, go up there and say it yourself!"

"Say it?" roared the sheriff. "It wouldn't do no good! That feller's got a brain like marble! The only thing he'll listen to is a grand jury indictment!"

"What for?" demanded the attorney.

"For everything! It might be for murder an' conspir'cy to railroad this feller, Axel Yager, to the pen'tentiary! We've had enough of Dolan in this country!"

"Well, go up and tell him so," invited Carlton.

The sheriff waved it away angrily.

"As for you, young feller," he snapped, "you'd better neglect to say much about Jim Black promptin' any one to kill Snow! There's nothin' in it. Nothin'. See? I I jest seen Jim Black."

"I knew you would," nodded Carlton.

The sheriff did not know which way to take the remark; so he let it go. Campbell broke in upon him.

"Then you're going to let Yager go?" he asked.

"Going to? No. I done it already!"

"On his own recognizance, I suppose?"

"Sure. The district attorney advised it. What is there to hold him on?"

Carlton's brain was working fast. He remembered how placid the prisoner had been during his march into the county-seat and wondered if the man believed he was to come among friends. Considering that a murder charge was hanging over his head, the man's docility had been remarkable!

"Then my trip was all for nothing!" he murmured.

"Sure. What else could it be? The whole thing's wrong. Everything's wrong with Dolan in it. You tell that feller I want to see him. If he don't come down in a few days, we'll go up after him! We'll straighten out that buzzard-roost, or we'll know why!"

Attorney Campbell pointed a mandatory finger.

"Sheriff," he said, "you may do as you see fit. I see no reason to interfere with your duty—or with your personal grudges. I only want to warn you that, if the prisoner is guilty, you have laid yourself open to serious charges as an official of this county!"

"I'll take the advice of the district attorney on that. I ain't goin' to you for advice; that's certain!"

"No," said the attorney. "And it's too bad. Well, good day!"

"Hey?"

"I said good day!"

The sheriff thought it over for a moment, then took the hint. Silence ensued. Van Dorn, who had not stirred a muscle before, began mopping his fat face and bare forehead.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "This is the most interesting country I ever got into. Do you stage these rows every day?"

"Every other day," smiled Campbell. "It's just routine business now. Some day —" and his face lighted a bit—"we'll have a new deal in this county, and then she'll begin to be worth while."

"What's the big trouble?" asked Van Dorn.

"Stick-in-the-mud ideas. New-fangled things—like better roads or power lines or sewer systems—bring in new folks, new manners of running things and possibly higher taxes. These are the main troubles, except for crookedness, and that's hard to prove. If I went into these courts with anything but iron-clad, riveted, absolutely proven cases, I'd be laughed out of court; so I'm stuck. The whole county's controlled—even down to the janitor in the court-house."

The illuminating talk struck Carlton amidships. Carlton was one of those "new-fangled" arrivals with "new-fangled" ideas. It was a minor point, but it was just another mite of evidence pointing toward a connection between the county politicians and the slouchy old miser of Lost Deer Valley.

"You folks stay here," finished Campbell, reaching for his hat. "I'm going over to the court-house to look at those records for Dolan. He must be playing some hunch. Make yourselves at home." And he vanished through the door.

With Campbell well on his errand, Van Dorn started asking shrewd questions about Dolan's country, keeping up the conversation while Carlton kept his eye on the big old clock ticking on the dingy wall over a rack of California reports and other law books banked up from the desk. An hour passed. Then Campbell strode through the doorway, laid his hat carefully over his ink-well and turned to the other two.

"Dolan will not get his information," he announced. "Part of the county records have been 'accidentally mislaid.' "

IX

BACK again in the valley. With Finch lying in a far-off hospital, with the knowledge that Dolan's weighty backing was always ready and with his own strength coming up gloriously so that he little resembled the failing man who had arrived months before, Carlton again took up the work of completing his little ranch under the copper mountain, just as if the water were tumbling down Lost Deer Creek already.

In the upper valley, across the old picket-fence which marked off his meadows from Finch's, the engineer could see horses and mules placidly grazing, attended only by Finch's half-witted employee and by a few others who came at times to help out. To all outward signs the valley was the abode of peace and pastoral beauty. Autumn leaves were beginning to fall off the oak trees; wild geese from some unknown habitat flew southward to their Winter homes; scudding clouds appeared in the once-burning skies, and cool winds soughed through pines, oaks, willows and the long, dry grass of the meadows. Inside the house the young wife kept a stove going almost steadily, feeding it from piles of cord-wood stacked up in a newly-built woodshed.

Carlton worked from morn to night, repairing fences, fixing old roofs, improving the fields and putting odd hours into that

system of irrigating ditches on which he had set his mind. With a transit he first ran levels along the inner rim of the hills, using one of his helpers as a rodman and placing stakes so as to form a gentle grade for the ditch. Then he started work, digging into the ground, blasting away rocks and pine-stumps and building gates and laterals to connect the little toy ditches of the future with the main irrigation system. He found his muscles growing stronger daily and his mind becoming keener. He enjoyed every minute of it.

Sometimes Carlton went outside and surveyed boundaries for others, straightening out disputes concerning property lines, which were often in helter-skelter condition. In this way he became well acquainted throughout the district, meeting all sorts of men, some of them belonging to the picturesque days of Bret Harte and others hailing recently from Michigan or Missouri or Iowa. They were the fruits of the work of the Western railroads in offering "colonist rates" and attracting the great population of settlers which was even then beginning to make the new West. Some of them went to the cities; some to the rich farm-lands, and some of the more adventurous, willing to "take a chance," drifted into the desert.

But Carlton gained the greatest collection of new acquaintances through his short visit to the county-seat. After the episode when Campbell learned that the county records had been secreted, the lawyer had taken the engineer about and introduced him to acquaintances who had happened in from all corners of the county. Some of these met Carlton's wife also. They were mine-owners from the Black Rock country, to the east; ranchers from the southern flat-lands about Escalante Creek and Willow Creek; hay and grain traders from the alfalfa tracts surrounding the county-seat, and prospectors from all the hills and valleys.

Campbell had not tried to regain the lost records. He explained that he did not wish to seem too eager; so he put in the rest of the time going around with Carlton. The meeting of Van Dorn and the guiding of that stout personage and two of the latter's Eastern friends to Mirage were mere incidents. He had left them with Dolan.

A month went by without happenings in the valley and apparently with none outside. Even the sheriff had not made good his threat to "clean Dolan out." Carlton's little place was changing. A cow, a big collie dog, two kittens, five ducks and two dozen chickens added life to the place and made it more homelike. He had brought them in from "down below," and in his heart he felt they constituted a sort of challenge. They made for a permanent residence, as if Jim Black and Ebenezer Finch never existed.

And then Finch came back.

He rode by on a sorrel mare just at nightfall one day, trailing two pack-mules laden with supplies and bringing a nondescript hired man in faded overalls, who paid no attention to the Carlton domicile but plugged right along for the upper ranch. Finch, however, seemed to take an interest in the Carlton improvements, noting the new woodshed, chicken-coops and cow-barn with appreciative eyes that peeped out from under an antiseptic bandage. He even nodded to Carlton, but the latter kept about his business.

The engineer sensed that there would be further complications when Finch arrived, and there were. A week later Finch strolled across the meadow and approached the little green picket-fence of the garden, waving a white handkerchief somewhat ironically. Carlton was washing his face behind the kitchen and strolled forth with a towel in his hand.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded, across the fence.

"Why—I sorter felt I'd like to have a little neighborly talk with ye," answered Finch with the old persuading, wheedling, whining voice. "I thought mebbe as haow we might be able to patch up them little troubles so's we'd be right friendly again. There hain't been a hoss or a mewl pizened since I went away, and I calc'late you been right neighborly abaout it. I thought mebbe you'd changed your mind; so I sez to myself, sez I, 'Let bygones be bygones;' so I come over here to make things friendly again."

"That's kind of you," nodded Carlton. "Didn't I say once I'd probably shoot you on sight?"

FINCH waggled the white rag hastily.

"You was all excited an' ruffled up," he deprecated. "A pusson's li'ble to say anything when he's that way. But,

sez I, 'A soft answer turneth away wrath;' so I'm a-tryin' to make things neighborly again. Now abaout them hosses." Finch waved them away. "It wasn't the loss, it was only the principle of the thing. It don't look friendly to pizen hosses. You kin see that yourself. But now we kin forgit them things—that is, if you want to stay here. Mebbe you don't want to."

Finch's eyes showed a crafty look.

"Let me hear your offer," demanded Carlton tersely.

"Well—you been right decent abaout that stock while I was away in the horspittle; so I calc'late I kin skeer up mebbe six thousan' or so——"

"I paid eight thousand!" reminded Carlton.

"Well, you couldn't expect me to give that much, considerin' me bein' sick with eary-sipilis with all sorts of doctor bills and a danged white nurse that cost me twenty-five dollars a week. 'Tain't fair. I'm a sick man. You wouldn't take advantage of me bein' sick, would you?"

The wheedling, self-pitying whine made Carlton want to hit the man.

"Your price is too low!" he snapped.

"Well—'tain't exac'ly the right thing to take advantage of a sick man that hain't hisself yit; it seems like things is comin' sorter hard fer me—sorter hard—but 'Live an' let live' is my mottow; so mebbe I kin skeer up eight thousan'. Mebbe I kin borry an' put myself into debt."

He stopped and sighed but received no satisfaction.

"I might be able to git even nine thousan'." He glanced sideways but got no response. "Or mebbe ten thousan'. I dunno. I reckon a man gits old an' foolish. That land ain't wuth ten thousan', but you're a young feller, an' mebbe it's better fer you to have the money than a poor ol' man with jest a few years to live." He sighed lugubriously. "It's takin' advantage of a poor, sick ol' man, but——"

Carlton leaned over the fence.

"Do you know how much I'll take?" he shouted.

"Lemme hear it."

"One million dollars!"

Finch's jaw sagged.

"Why—why—that's plum' foolish!" he gasped. "It's—it's——"

"Certainly! The whole talk is foolish! You couldn't get this ranch for all the money you've got! Now you get across that field and stay there! Move!"

Finch's jaw quit sagging and clamped together.

"That hain't the way to talk!" he protested.

"Git!" snapped Carlton, pointing toward the upper ranch.

The mandate seemed to touch some hidden spring that threw away a mask.

"Who? Me?" The old miser trembled for a moment. "Hey? Hey? You'll talk outa the other side of yer maouth pretty soon! Dang you, I've hed abaout enough of ye! You hoss-pizenin', sneakin', spyin' city-bred mongrel—I've stood fer yer nonsense abaout long enough! You git aout of this valley in ten days—the hull pack an' passel of ye—or I'll give ye a taste of somethin' you'll never git over! I'll show you! Huh—I'll show you!"

The engineer, at first startled by the transformation, looked one moment into the hectic face of Finch and then quietly started along the fence toward the front gate. He reached the gate before Finch was half finished, and he reached Finch just as the latter came to the end. Finch backed away with his feet, but his mouth held its ground manfully.

"Don't you start nothin'," he warned. "You hit me, an' I'll make things so hot you'll wish you'd never saw the place! Hey——"

Carlton lashed out. It was his only comment. An instant later he regretted it. He had not properly gaged the growth of his arm and shoulder muscles, and the crushing blow knocked Finch half-way across the lane. It crashed into that snarling, leering face just below the eye, and, when the engineer lifted the dizzy man up, he saw a bluish welt on that countenance as big as an egg.

Carlton had struck a man just out of the hospital. His temper disappeared in a flood of blame for himself. He lifted the man almost tenderly and stood him on his feet.

"I'm sorry," he said contritely, before he saw how foolish the remark sounded. "Sorry you're sick, that is," he amended. "If you were well, now, I'd take pleasure in knocking your head off!"

The victim gave him one look, and in that glance the engineer saw a cold malevolence as dangerous as the fangs of a snake. But

Finch did not say anything. He didn't even brush himself. He simply turned away and walked straight across the field to his own lands, with the engineer watching until he had passed the last oak tree up the slope. Then Carlton finished washing his face very thoughtfully.

The wife had noticed the incident from a window, and so had one of the helpers. But, by the time they arrived, it was over. Later on the engineer became nervous. The old strain was returning. Some one always kept awake of nights now, guarding the place. And yet nothing happened.

Dan Dolan arrived suddenly at the end of a week, riding a buckskin horse that looked piteous under the great load. The boss came alone and unheralded, wearing an unaccustomed khaki outfit, a broad-brimmed hat and a pair of shining new boots just off his counters.

"Thought I'd put up for the night," he announced. "May stay two nights. On my way to Red Rock, back in the mountains. Movin' on the quiet. Meet a friend there Thursday, mebbe. Don't say I was here."

Carlton welcomed him, and the wife, though somewhat reserved, prepared to make him comfortable. Thus, while she busied herself in the little kitchen for the evening meal, the boss spread his great bulk in a creaking chair before the open fireplace while the engineer told him of the latest incidents.

"I knew all about it," was Dolan's comment. "I'm watchin' things here. Finch seems desp'rate to git you out of the way."

"Well, do you think he'll carry out his threats?"

"Nope. He's too busy now. Got too many irons in the fire. If he hurt you, he'd have too much extry trouble. He's only tryin' to skeer you. Mebbe that's all he can think of jest now."

"Well, he won't scare me, but I'll admit this thing keeps me nervous."

"It'll be over pretty soon," grunted the boss.

"What makes you think so?"

Dolan gave the engineer one of his knowing glances.

"Son," he observed, "if anything happened to you, it'll tear the county to pieces with one big fight! For a year or more this county's been wakin'—wakin' like a man from sleep. There's a crowd here that's choked things for years. A combination. It's like a net—one strand tied to another. I was a strand once. I got into a row with the rest and backed out. I'd begun to see where I was headin'. But the other strands held strong together. They tied up with still other strands. Only, it was all underground. Couldn't be traced.

"Then you came in. You made me look at Finch more careful. The more I looked the more I seen. Finch seemed like one of the strands. Bimeby he begun to appear like a main cable. Then I dug around some more. There was men that hated Finch for many reasons. There was men that backed Finch for many reasons. Savvy? They begun to take sides. The lines are drawin' tight. Then there's men that's workin' for the county gang, and there's them that's ag'in 'em. The whole county's organized—both ways—and you're the spark that'll mebbe set off the skyrockets!"

"Me?" gasped Carlton.

"You or Finch. If anything happens to either one, there's goin' to be a crash! The whole county's lined up! If you'd paid much 'tention to politics, you'd 'a' seen it!"

The wife was taking a dish of steaming soup to the table, but she halted, petrified, with the lamplight setting off the astonishment on her pretty face.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Carlton. "So I'm a *casus belli!*"

"I dunno what that is," said the boss, dubiously, "but there's goin' to be happenin's around here—darned soon!"

CARLTON was thunderstruck at the importance thrust upon him. He began to see why he had gone to the county-seat and why Campbell had introduced him around to thoughtful men from every section of the county. There was war on from Thunder Mountain to South End, and he was one of the chief factors!

And yet the boss seemed to be comfortable about it—very. He appeared to have the satisfied, exalted expression of the cat that had swallowed the cream. It made the engineer wonder whose funeral was coming next. The boss was like some volcano which, to eliminate an irritating ant-hill, might blast away a whole province.

"You set your mind easy, ma'am," said Dolan to the wife. "There won't nothin'

happen to you folks. If she happens, she'll be the other way."

"I don't want anything to happen," she responded. "Folks ought to live in peace."

"Peace?" came Dolan's deep voice, like the lowing of a bull. "Yes, ma'am; we're goin' to have peace in this county if we have to turn her inside out! And I'm goin' to work for it!"

The boss walked over to the waiting dinner-table with the rest and made himself comfortable, tucking his napkin into the collar of his soft shirt and making the nearest knife ready for business by wiping it carefully on the napkin—an impolite action caused by years of eating in a certain Chinese restaurant.

"I'm gittin' a little old, ma'am," he continued. "I'm gittin' tired of fights and ructions. There's a new time comin' in this land, ma'am. Please pass the butter."

"You mean that things are going to be entirely different?" she asked. "The—saloons and gambling places and dance-halls are all going to close?"

"No, ma'am. There'll still be some devil in human nature. Only, there'll be less saloons and dance-halls and more schools. Mebbe after my time they'll all close. Mebbe I'd be glad of it. If I could close my dance-hall now, I'd do it, ma'am, but it wouldn't be right."

"Why not? Why not close it—or sell it?"

"Suppose I did. S'pose some other sinner took my place. Ran the joint. Took charge of the girls. Are you sure he'd treat everybody like I do—feed 'em, look after 'em when they're sick? Are you sure I'd be doin' right?"

"But—it's barbarous!" she exclaimed.

"Sure. The whole system's wrong. I know it now. I'm older than I was, ma'am. But don't you think it's better now for me to run the joint? If there must be crime and riot up here, ain't it better to have some one around that can reg'late it?"

Carlton changed the subject hastily. The view-points of the tough old Western saloon-keeper and the cultured girl, whose mother was president of a Philadelphia branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, were a trifle too divergent. Thereafter they talked on various topics until late, and peace reigned.

As the hours wore on, Carlton began to notice his wife thawing perceptibly toward the boss. Though he was crude and coarse-grained, lacking in morals except by his own blunt code, there was a magnetism and an inner strength which reached beyond the lines of culture or prejudice and gripped like a vise those upon whom he bestowed his friendship. Here, before the firelight where pine-logs blazed, the boss of the roughest section of the West seemed a different man. It was about the first home atmosphere he was ever in, and, though he never quite overcame his awkwardness, his soul seemed to warm in the glow of the hearth-flames.

He spoke of Indian-fights of bygone days, of great gold-strikes, great feuds and queer characters, until the whole colorful, tragic, romantic Southwest of the old days seemed to appear before them as on a screen. He spoke with the bland innocence of a child, seeing things with the clear prejudices of a child's lucid, but elemental, mind. One man was good, another bad; a well's water was good or bad; a community was good or bad. There was no neutral between them.

He had picked a child out of a blizzard and given it his scanty provisions until it died despite his savage desire for its life. One man he saved from a mob; another's life he blew out as one would snuff a candle. He spoke of the one as blandly as the other. And during his whole recital there was honesty, honesty, honesty until the walls seemed to ring under the spell of his downright soul.

"Well, what do you think of him?" asked Carlton of his wife later, when the stars were shining coldly into their little dark upstairs room.

"I pity him!" she responded. "I never saw such a fine man gone to waste! I pity him with all my heart!"

"Well, don't tell him that," he advised, sleepily; and then he forgot all about it.

Carlton awoke with a start and peered about the dark room.

"What was that?" he whispered, but the ticking of the little alarm-clock was the only response.

He strained to hear better. A cricket chirped somewhere outside, and a watcher in the dining-room rustled a newspaper. The engineer, feeling foolish, slid back into dreamland:

Five minutes later he awoke again, clutching at the coverlets. Far away, faint to his ears, came a vague but persistent

drumming, drumming, drumming that could mean but one thing.

"Horses!" he gasped. "They're going through the pass! Hear it?" He shook his wife out of her slumbers. "Hear that?"

She came to consciousness slowly.

"I hear something," she said at last. "It sounds like animals running." She stayed quiet for a time. "They're coming, not going!"

Carlton sprang out of bed.

"Maybe Finch is up to something!" he surmised.

"They're coming!" she reiterated. "Wait! I heard a metallic sound. They're going past the lane. I wonder what time it is."

Carlton lit a match and peered into the clock.

"Three in the morning," he announced.

He went to the window and looked out, seeing nothing but the cold stars and the old copper mountain whose black silhouette loomed high above. And still the eery drumming continued. Carlton at length thought he could almost hear the creak of saddle-leather. He grasped his trousers and boots and pulled them on. He picked up his Winchester and got ready to start down-stairs, but, while he was organizing, the noise of the spectral cavalcade grew fainter and fainter until only the sound of the cricket could be heard, seeming to chuckle over the mystery.

"It seems to be over," announced the wife. "They didn't stop here. They went up the valley. Better get back to bed. I guess it won't affect us."

"I'm not so sure!" responded Carlton. "There's something fishy here. It sounded like a troop of cavalry—and Dolan's in this house. I wonder if they're after him. Great Scott, it may be the sheriff with a posse, putting up at Finch's for the night!"

Carlton grabbed all his clothes off a chair and began to move as if he were through with sleeping.

"What are you going to do?" she asked at length.

"Why, I'm going to look into this thing! There's some monkey-business going on and——"

THE muffled crack of a shot came to his ears from far across the upper fields. He ran to the window, buttoning his shirt. There was a quick flash from the brush near Finch's house—then another. Then another. The far-away reports began to roll like musketry. There was a faint, stifled yell—then a fusillade that sounded like fire-crackers.

A pin-point of steady flame arose from a dark blotch that stood where a Finch barn ought to be. It grew a bit. Then a lurid yellow glare sprang up from the place as if all the hay had caught fire at once. Horses started stampeding in the distant fields, thundering their hoofs as they milled around inside their fences. The glare swung high, illuminating the sides of the tumble-down houses and barns.

Carlton jumped down-stairs two steps at a time, holding the Winchester. He rushed upon the tenantless dining-room, where the hearth-embers were still glowing and a lighted lamp stood upon the red table-cloth. He looked out of the door. One of the hired men was standing outside the threshold, smoking a corn-cob and looking across the field.

"Hello!" he ejaculated. "You up? Looks as if there's trouble over there?"

"Where's Dolan?" demanded the engineer.

"Him? Oh, mebbe he's asleep. He sleeps sound, Dolan does. No use to go after him. Let him sleep."

Carlton grunted assent and walked forward, swinging open his yard gate and making for the oak groves on the upper part of his ranch. He was filled with curiosity. It was a riot, nothing less. A riot in his valley! What did it mean?"

He walked past the dark willows of the creek and neared his boundary, where the half-built irrigation ditch lay. The shots were keeping up, some singly and some in gusts, and, as he went nearer, he could see the silhouettes of men dodging about in the light of the crackling fire.

He came to the ditch and nearly fell in. He started walking along it cautiously. A horse whickered from an oak grove to the left. He turned and approached it and finally discerned the dark forms of horses massed under a tree. He put out his hand and patted a soft muzzle, noting the bridle.

A cry came to his ears. He sensed that a form was staggering across the ditch and approaching the horses. He held his rifle ready and walked toward the man warily. The man's breath seemed to be sucking in like a broken-down pump, but even in his pain he noticed the engineer.

"Hey!" he yelled. "Keep away! Who are you?"

"I'm Carlton. I own this place."

"So did I!" snarled the other, with an unearthly note of triumph in his voice. "But I'm even now! I got him! Dang his hide to Tophet, I got him—at last—oh!" He started gurgling.

Carlton bent over him quickly and struck a match.

"Tom Fulton!" he gasped. "You're shot, man—your shirt's all red!"

"Yeh!" snarled Fulton. "He got me. He sat up in bed an' shot till he keeled over. But we got him. Oh!" And he put his hand to his chest.

Carlton knew whom Fulton had shot. In his mind he visualized the murderous pistol-battle in Finch's old shanty, with a pack of vengeful demons spurting hot lead through the dark doorway and the miser dying as he had lived—alone in a corner.

But Carlton heeded his duty to a helpless man. The poor monomaniac who could not forget an injury lay on the ground, gasping with pain. The engineer picked him up gently and tried to lead him to a horse, but the man collapsed. Carlton dragged him a little way but soon noted that others were coming across the dark fields. The firing had ceased. The sides of the old barn were tumbling down and the flames were reducing. It all seemed to be over.

Another vague human form came toward the horses, then some more. Carlton called for assistance and explained who he was, to make sure of them. Mysterious hands grasped Fulton and put him over a horse. Other ghostly hands lashed him into place. Vague, bashful voices bade the engineer take Fulton to his home, promising to summon medical aid immediately. Then the dark forms sprang to horses and galloped away—presumably to hasten the medical aid.

Leading the horse and stumbling forward, Carlton came to his house and yelled toward the closed door. Every window was illuminated, but he did not notice that. The door swung open, and his wife and the two helpers appeared. And then he saw Dolan.

The boss was seated at the table, fully dressed, with account-books and papers and rough filing-cabinets piled high in front of him on the red table-cloth. Papers were everywhere—yellow, white, blue and green—littering the whole table and even the floor. The boss seemed engrossed in them to the exclusion of everything else.

Carlton and the others took Fulton to a room, after which the engineer rushed to join Dolan. Then he stood irresolute. The boss looked as if he had struck the treasure of the ages.

"Gosh!" he mumbled.

Then he struck another find, and his eyes opened still wider.

"What is it?" interrupted Carlton.

The boss looked up like some old lion holding venison in his paw and loath to be disturbed.

"It's the evidence," he snapped. He checked himself and explained. "The evidence. Savvy? Somebody took it from the Finch place and left it here accidental."

"A coincidence, of course," said Carlton with gentle irony.

"Sure. Coincidence. But it's jest enough coincidence to bust open this county from end to end! It's changed the whole deal. You thought you was in a fight for your ranch. I thought I was in a county political fight. Son, do you know where the trail leads to?"

"Where?"

"Into the gen'ral offices of a big railroad, into the Department of the Interior and mebbe into the halls of the United States Congress!"

X

"WHAT?" shouted the engineer.

The boss lit a black cigar having the dimensions and about the smell of a sewer-pipe.

"Abso-lutely!" he responded. "There's enough dynamite in them papers to rock the State!"

Carlton sank into a chair while his wife joined him from the sick-room.

"What's the general idea of it all?" he demanded. "What's happened? Begin at the beginning."

"Well, let's see. Near as I can make out, there's a plan up in Congress to build a big dam across Thunder Mountain Creek for irrigation. There was a lot of talk about it some time ago, but it all died down. I'd clean forgot about it. Then this year, while Congress was fiddlin' over bills, somebody started the Thunder Mountain thing again. Then a 'lectric comp'ny seen a

chance for a power project, and the railroad wanted to build a supply-line. Also wanted to tap the country when the land was irrigated and the settlers came in. Savvy? Everything seemed to come at once—the gosh-dangdest proposition the county ever seen!"

The boss's eyes grew mystic, and he blew a dozen smoke-rings. "She'd irrigate the land from Thunder Mountain clear down to Escalante. She'd bring in a new deal all around. New settlers. Homes. Fruit-ranches. Power lines. Roads. Schools. Why, in five years real-estate here'd be sellin' in Chicago and New York, like they do in Los Angeles. But all this was on the quiet. Congress hadn't done nothin' yet, and neither had the railroad. Or the power company. They was only considerin' it, and they didn't want it to git out so's to start land-speculation.

"And then somebody leaked. I git this from Finch's papers, but some things is mixed up. It may be congressman, railroad man or map-maker; I dunno. I only know that right away some influence started buyin' up all the land in sight, on the quiet. Buyin', beggin' or stealin'. I knew there was somethin' goin' on, but I couldn't lay my finger on it. Bimeby I seen that the county gang was in it. Later on I begun to see Finch and Black in it. Finch seemed to be the main purchasin'-agent for the crowd.

"Mebbe they figgered nobody'd suspect him. Only, he couldn't play square, him and Black. They slugged people with guns, mortgages or grocery bills. Bimeby they had all sorts of land around the foot-hills here. Meantime, they held up their own crowd. They bought cheap and padded the expense-accounts. That was Finch all through. He jest grabbed. Couldn't play square even on a crooked deal. Just wasn't built that way. Savvy?"

"Yes, I understand. But let's get this straight. How much actual crime is uncovered?"

"Huh—look here. Suppose some congressman was makin' money out of it? S'pose they was aimin' to fix high prices for rights of way for the Gov'ment or the railroad or power comp'ny? S'pose there was others mixed up in Finch's or Black's killin's? S'pose Finch didn't have to pay taxes on them lands he held? S'pose the records in the recorder's office was 'mislaid' so's the county gang wouldn't have to pay for taxes either? S'pose it was proved that dummy homesteaders was workin' everywhere? S'pose the whole county was jest loot, loot, loot? D'ye see where the trail leads? Crime? Why, there's enough crime to keep the jails busy for twenty years!"

"Phew!" whistled Carlton. "And what are you going to do with all this evidence?"

"Give it to Van Dorn. He's a Gov'ment man. He was ordered out here to snoop around and look into things. Him and me had a long powwow. He seen all that I seen, but we couldn't get no further. Even the county records was closed to us. We milled around like stray burros, me watchin' the trails here and him diggin' up things outside. Finally Van Dorn says the only way to git anything was to git into Finch's house and look over his papers. But there wasn't no way to do that except by breakin' the law."

Dolan's bland explanation made the engineer smile.

"I see," he nodded. "And then, just by luck, a lot of crazy hoodlums raided Finch's place and took out the papers by accident."

"Jest so," nodded the boss. "Coincidence. Tom Fulton got over his bullet and worked up his revengeful sperrits. Then there was others got het up, till finally they all got so darned mad they jest couldn't stand it any longer. Savvy?"

"Yes, I savvy," admitted Carlton. "I savvy it all. Quite a wonderful coincidence. And then your being here tonight—a miracle!"

"Sure it was. I jest stopped here on my way beyond to see a man. Now I've changed my mind; but if questions is ever asked I can show him for a witness. Savvy?"

"Yes, I understand," said Carlton gently, and then he sighed.

Through whisky, chicanery, arson, riot and manslaughter his salvation had come, and, though he knew that the valley of his home was saved to him for keeps, he wondered now if the price had not gone far beyond him. The boss was watching him, curious and puzzled, as if trying to interpret the expression in Carlton's face and that of his wife.

"Didn't I do right?" he demanded with the simple directness of a child.

The engineer countered.

"Do you think this riot will kill off the chances for the dam?"

"Not much! And, when she's built, she'll be built fair and square. The water'll come down clean to a land that's clean."

"Well—in that case, I guess it's worth the price. I wonder who's going to own Finch's place now?"

"I dunno. Mebbe I will. Finch prob'ly didn't leave a will or have any heirs; so the land'll go back to the State. Mebbe I'll buy it."

Carlton's mind took another tack.

"Did you run across the trail of Jim Black?" he asked, pointing to the papers.

"Sure. Tracks all over the place. All sorts of money passed between 'em."

"From Finch to Black, of course."

"No. That's the queer part of it. From Black to Finch!"

"Why, Black didn't have any money!"

"That's what I thought. But look at them receipt-books."

Carlton leaned over and began pawing at the papers. Everything was there—every transaction of Finch's for years back, marked down with a scrupulousness that amounted to a mania. He even had duplicates of the receipts he gave, and these showed the trail of Jim Black. The more Carlton looked the more interested he became, until at length his wife tapped him on the shoulder. He looked up. The darkness was gone. The lamp was burning dimly, and the skies outside held the blue haze of dawn. Dolan was sleeping in his chair and snoring gently, with a smile on his face as if he were living again in the heroic days of his youth. The red embers of the fireplace had turned to gray ashes.

"Fulton is dead," she announced very quietly.

"Dead?"

Carlton stared at his wife, then looked out of the window to where a bird on the limb of a tree was just starting its first song of the day, bidding the world to waken to life and sunshine.

The wife sighed.

"Why should it be like this?" she asked helplessly. "It seems there's been nothing but tragedy since we came."

He took her hand.

"Maybe it's part of the price we must pay," he said gently.

"The price of our living here? If I thought that, I wouldn't stay another minute!"

"No. It isn't the price for us. It's a bigger thing than us. We're in it, but we're not the thing itself. It's just the price of civilization, girl—working up through tragedies to happiness. Nothing is born without a pang, and so these things are natural."

DAN DOLAN woke them an hour later, when the sun was streaming slantwise through the tidy curtains. The engineer was sunk in a great chair, and she was perched on its broad leathern arm and sleeping peacefully on his shoulder. The boss was loath to spoil the picture, but the papers littering the room cried for action.

At Dolan's yell the couple came to life, and the embarrassed wife rushed off to attend to her belated kitchen duties. Carlton arose to bring in some wood.

"What are you going to do now?" he asked as he stretched himself.

"Goin' to bring this stuff into town. Van Dorn's there. You better come with me. Mebbe there'll be somethin' doin'."

Thus within an hour the young engineer and the old saloon-keeper loped through the pass and into the long road that led through bleak and barren lands to the tumble-down settlement of Mirage.

Van Dorn was there, and so were many others, who drank at Dolan's bar or played cards at tables or lounged about the hitching-racks outside and swapped yarns. Except for a subdued air of excitement, it appeared like a casual, go-as-you-please gathering of strays from every section of the hills and valleys of the desert county. Here was a prospector with frayed clothes and heavy beard; yonder, a ranch-owner wearing expensive high boots and Stetson hat. Some had store-clothes, with cartridge-belts and pistols at their hips, while others displayed the sheepskin "chaps" of the range country further south. Some were slouchy and dirty; some clean, and still others bore the fresh dust of the road.

When the boss arrived, every face was turned toward him, but beyond a casual nod to all and a short conversation with a miner eager to impart some news, he ignored the gathering for the time and strode with his gunny-sack full of documents into the back of his store, where

the bald and smiling Van Dorn was waiting with his two companions.

Dolan slammed book after book and file upon file to the desk in back of his clerk's cage.

"You keep 'em," he advised. "If anything happens, hide 'em. The whole county's heard about this Finch trouble, and she's up in arms. Visitors is expected. Carlton, you explain things to Van Dorn. I'm goin' inside." And he strode into his dance-hall.

Every one lined up to the bar noisily at a loud invitation from Dolan, but within the half-darkened cage the bald-headed Government man attacked his papers as eagerly as a fisherman with the prize trout of the year.

"But," he admitted at length in perplexity, "there's one thing I can't understand, and that's this man Black. Here's a batch of receipts where he's given all sorts of money to Finch. See—received of Jim Black, ten thousand dollars; Black, five thousand—forty thousand—eighteen thousand. Where did the man get all the money? Who was he agent for? Some of these receipts are three years old. Most of them are very recent. What does it mean?"

"It's all beyond me," admitted Carlton. And then he straightened suddenly.

Into his ears came a noise like distant thunder, made by the pounding hoofs of trotting horses and coming nearer constantly. He went to the door and looked out. Swinging up the street came a score of horsemen riding close together, with spurs and bits jingling, rifles slung over shoulders and pistol-butts protruding from many holsters.

"The sheriff!" gasped Carlton.

Van Dorn jumped and thrust his loot under a heap of tents and blankets. Carlton hastened into the dance-hall, where the boss stood in front of the bar and chatted with a coterie of friends as if nothing were happening. The cavalcade drew up to the building. The loungers on the porch ambled in through the door, but not a comment was made by any one. The atmosphere seemed charged with something quiet and chilly and deadly. In spite of the low murmur of conversation, there seemed to be a silence that shrieked through the big board dance-hall.

And then the sheriff came in.

He stamped through the doorway at the head of an armed delegation that acted like a company of militia taking charge of a rioters' headquarters, pointing no weapons but lining up along the front wall and standing ready for anything. The other groups of silent men massed behind Dolan toward the rear of the room.

The sheriff advanced directly toward the towering boss of Mirage.

"I've come for an accountin'," he announced, holding hands warily at his hips. "What sort o' madhouse you runnin' up here? You're a deputy. Now speak!"

It was very direct, and it put the boss on the defensive instantly. He stood there, the largest man in the place and the center of all eyes, figuring on how to avoid being bullied and yet prevent a holocaust which might exterminate the whole roomful. It was a hair-trigger situation, and the boss held his temper.

"As how?" he inquired.

"How? With killin's all around the place? Murder an' arson everywhere? How about Snow? How about Hackett? How about Finch? Yeh, we heard about Finch this mornin' on the road. That's why we came faster. How about it?"

"Search me," demurred Dolan. "I didn't kill him. I wasn't even there."

"Yeh? Well, why didn't you arrest them that was there? Hey? You're a deputy sheriff, ain't you? What kind o' game you playin', anyhow?"

The boss had stood about enough. He did not want to start hostilities between these masses of armed men, but his choleric temper was straining to the breaking-point. He tried hard to fight it down, and at last he succeeded.

"Mike!" he bawled to his bartender. "Where's my deputy's star?"

"I dunno. Mebbe she's in the nail-box. No—no; I remember now; you used it to plug a leak in the drain-pipe durin' that rain. She's been out there——"

"Go git it!"

Somebody snickered. Some one else laughed outright. Even the most stern-faced deputies smiled. The incident sapped the tension from the atmosphere instantly, though the sheriff still stood like a figure of wrath.

Mike returned in a few seconds, via the rear door.

"I can't git it!" he shouted. "She's soldered in!"

"Rip off the whole danged pipe!" snorted the boss. "Gimme that star!"

Rasping sounds ensued outside, and then the bartender returned with a piece of pipe with a deputy sheriff's star stuck tightly in the joint. Dolan grabbed it and thrust it into the hands of the scowling sheriff.

"I resign!" roared the boss. "I ain't your danged deputy no more. Here's my star!"

The sheriff dashed the pipe to the polished floor.

"That's enough o' that!" he snarled. "This ain't play!" He stopped and straightened and pointed a grim forefinger. "In the name of the State of California, I arrest ye for the murder of Elijah Hackett an' for complic'ty in the murder of Ebenezer Finch!"

"What makes you think I was connected with the Finch thing?" asked Dolan, almost purring.

"Aw, you got a finger in everything up here. Don't you think I git any information from anybody? Huh—better keep yourself under arrest. It'll save trouble!"

The face of the boss was thunderous.

"You arrest me?" he roared, clenching his mighty fist and advancing straight toward the backing sheriff despite the armed men behind him. "You arrest me, hey? Well, now you listen to me. You figgered I was gittin' too close on your trail, so you'd grab me before I done any damage, didn't you? When you heard Finch was raided, you rode hell-bent for fear somebody might find out too much—didn't you? Well, you're too slow! You and your gang is cooked, finished and done forever! You're through!"

VAN DORN, who had stood quietly watching the others, now came forward. His attitude was offhand and conversational, as if there wasn't a firearm or an excitable person in the room.

"In the name of the United States Government," he announced easily, showing a badge on his vest, "I hereby arrest the sheriff of this county for complicity in a wholesale plot to swindle homesteaders out of their lands!"

A dozen rifles almost fell from paralyzed hands. A score of men stood as if the earth had opened beneath them. The petrified sheriff's jaw sagged and his eyes bulged with amazement, while his face turned white.

"What—what are you givin' me?" he fenced.

"You know what it is," said Van Dorn easily. "It's about the Thunder Mountain dam and the railroad. We might as well speak about it openly now. The bill has gone to Congress."

" 'Rah!" yelled some one.

Somebody else joined in and started a chorus of joyful profanity. The stricken deputies lowered their rifles and stared. They were regular deputies or political friends of the sheriff or adventurous citizens hastily sworn in for the anticipated trump-card raid. The latter class started for the door, milling into another group of the sheriff's men who were standing over the threshold.

"Hey!" yelled Van Dorn suddenly. "Stop that man!"

"Jim Black!" gasped Carlton.

The man had been with the inconspicuous group at the doorway all along, unobserved until now. He had started to disappear, but Van Dorn had been noting him from the first.

The Government man strode forward. So did Carlton. Black saw he could not jam through the throng quickly enough; so he turned. His hand whipped to his side. A pistol flashed out and pointed straight at Van Dorn. The men beside the latter jumped out of the line of fire, while those behind Jim Black also scattered. Dolan speeded behind his bar, but nobody noticed him.

"Quit that! You're under arrest!" yelled the white-faced Government man to Black. "Put up that gun!"

"Take me!" invited Black.

He was smiling through slit eyes and crouching forward like a cat about to spring.

The Government man was plucky enough, but the pistol-barrel was unwavering, and his round face began to give forth perspiration. He decided to spar for time.

"So this is where you've come to!" he remarked, trying to appear easy. "We've searched the whole United States for you, Joe Barton. A man doesn't take a hundred thousand dollars from an Army transport without the Government keeping after him pretty fine. Pretty fine! Don't you remember me? The fellow who checked your accounts in San Francisco before you

breezed away three years ago? Come on; drop that gun. Quit it!"

"Take me!" challenged Black, backing away slowly.

Men were getting behind chairs, tables, walls, the bar and everything else handy. The sheriff was flattening himself against the picture of a prize-fighter. His deputies had forgotten their errand and were scattered all over the place. Carlton was a little to one side of Van Dorn, standing his ground and wondering just what to do. He did not want to produce a pistol and perhaps start something; neither did he trust Black and his weapon. He therefore kept his hands near his sides and awaited developments. Black looked like a crouching panther.

And yet the bald-headed Van Dorn, palpably unarmed, started to walk forward while holding his empty hands out. He had made his decision. He was a Government man and knew the power and weight of the great, relentless moral forces behind him. He figured that, as Black had been a Government man, he fully realized the uselessness of opposing those forces, thus being amenable to a peaceful arrest. For Black the jig was up. Even he could see it. Van Dorn had not been fed full of Black's reputation as a gunman; neither did he believe that any man could kill an unarmed one in cold blood. Therefore, part in earnest and part as a bluff, he laid his human fears aside and advanced.

"Look out!" came a yell from the back of the room.

Black had backed to the threshold. The Government man still walked forward, a little overconfident, a little overeager to make the arrest, with his hand stretched out persuasively for Black's gun. For a moment the silent crowd wondered if the arrest were not to be made after all. Black had a hunted look on his face. Then his expression changed. Van Dorn took another step.

"Hey!" yelled an awed man. "Stop him!"

But it was too late. Even though Black could not kill an unarmed man who walked forward publicly with hands up, Black could stop this Federal agent long enough to get away, and he did. Black's pistol blazed a stream of fire right into Van Dorn's shoulder. The roar of the shot galvanized the room. The Government man, wounded purposely, yelled and staggered. Then Black leaped backward.

Instantly Carlton jerked out his pistol and fired madly. The gun kicked in his hand. Black half turned and brought the muzzle of that deadly pistol toward him. One instant, one quiver of Black's muscles, and the engineer might be in eternity.

Suddenly a blast of heat and lead roared across Carlton's face, stunning him and making his ears ring. The gust of fire blew away part of the doorway and hurled Black straight backward like a piece of paper in a heavy wind. A stream of acrid smoke blurred the entrance, and, when it cleared away, the boss, behind the bar, was taking an empty shell from a shotgun.

Black, lying queerly on the porch, was a dead man.

Carlton took one look and then turned away, shuddering, to where Van Dorn was nursing his shoulder. The sheriff was approaching the bar with his hands up. The boss jerked his thumb to somebody, and that man took the sheriff's armament away; after which Dolan came from his trenches and approached the suffering Van Dorn.

"Say!" he asked. "I want to know somethin'. This feller, Black, went into pardnership with Finch, usin' stolen money. That's clear enough. But did Black ever have a sister?"

The suffering man looked reproachful, but he gave answer.

"Never had a sister or any other relatives."

"——!" said the boss ruefully. "And I swallowed that yarn! I guess I'm gittin' old!"

ONE year later. Again the boss was preparing for an evening's festivity in his enlarged dance-hall. Again a knot of men congregated about the bar or wandered around the lighted street amid the sounds of tinkling music. It was the same old settlement, and yet it had changed a bit. Freight-teams were streaming in with supplies for the new dam in the hills to the northward. Two hotels, a barber-shop, a hardware store, a feed store and a telephone exchange had added to the number of buildings. The population had grown enormously, and Government engineers, construction laborers and railroad right-of-way men were big elements in it.

To the north, up at Thunder Mountain, a new town had been built overnight for the workers. To the south, four miles from the entrance to Lost Deer Valley—and buying its hay—a railroad camp was established. Along the projected railroad line settlers were taking up land daily, in advance of the coming irrigation waters. Dolan's store had four clerks. Down at the county-seat a new collection of officials had just been elected. The power company was planning high-tension lines from Thunder Mountain to the coast and had the franchises. The county was booming.

With a check in his pocket for hay just sold, Harry Carlton dismounted from his horse in front of the old dance-hall and walked inside. A yell greeted him. Dan Dolan, a little more gray-haired, came from behind the bar and extended a hairy paw.

"Congratulations!" he roared.

Then he turned to the assembled crowd and held up his hand like a prize-fight announcer.

"Gents, one and all!" he shouted. "Shake hands with Harry Carlton, new member of the County Board of Supervisors from Mirage!"

They shook hands—prospectors and miners, ranchers and grain-buyers, engineers and laborers, until finally Carlton broke away from them and dragged the boss into the rear of his greatly enlarged store, where there was more privacy.

"Well, she's all over," he said, perching on a counter and accepting one of the deadly cigars. "I owe it to you, Dolan, and so does the county. I want to thank you."

The boss waved it away.

"It wasn't me," he demurred. "If you hadn't stacked up pretty well that first time when you went below and the boys looked you over, you'd 'a' been passed up. You got what was comin'."

Carlton chuckled.

"Huh! With half the old gang in jail and the rest skipped out, the election was so one-sided there wasn't any fun to it. Campbell becomes superior judge by a vote of four-thousand-and-thirty to one. Who wrote in that other name?"

"I guess we needn't worry about that," responded the amiable boss. "How's the wife and kid?"

"That's what I wanted to talk about. I told you over the 'phone about the boy coming, but I didn't tell you the rest of it. My wife's mother is head of a W. C. T. U. and bitter about alcohol; she's up at the house now, but we've decided to scandalize her. That boy's going to be named after the toughest old saloon-keeper in the State!"

Dolan looked startled, and then he stared out of the door for a long time. But, when the leonine old face came back toward Carlton again, it was very somber, and he shook his head.

"Not saloon-keeper, boy; not for very long, anyhow. Times is changin'. You're goin' to name that boy after a merchant!"

SO YE BRING ME BACK THE TALE

BY W. J. COE

TREK on, O ye of the restless feet
Who follow the endless trail,
Though triumph attend you, or defeat—
So ye bring me back the tale.

Trek on, though your search may have no end,
Though your luck hold foul or fair,
You carry the heart of an invalid
Condemned to an invalid's chair.

Trek on, O ye of the far-flung quest
In the lands beyond the pale,
I'll grudge ye not adventure's quest
So ye bring me back the tale.

Needs Must

BY BARONESS ORCZY

Author of "The Laughing Cavalier" and "A Battle of Wits," etc.

THE children were all huddled up together in one corner of the room. Étienne and Valentine, the two eldest, had their arms round the little one. As for Lucile, she would have told you herself that she felt just like a bird between two snakes—terrified and fascinated—especially by that little man with the pale face and the light gray eyes and the slender white hands unstained by toil, one of which rested lightly upon the desk and was only clenched now and then at a word or a look from the other man or from Lucile herself.

As for that other, he just tried to browbeat her. It was not difficult, for in truth she felt frightened enough already with all this talk of traitors and that awful threat of the guillotine.

But Lucile Clamette would have remained splendidly loyal in spite of all those threats if it hadn't been for the children. She was little mother to them, for father was a cripple with speech and mind already impaired by creeping paralysis, and mama had died when little Josephine was born. And now those fiends threatened not only her but Étienne, who was not fourteen, and Valentine, who was not much more than ten, with death, unless she—Lucile—broke the solemn word which she had given to *M. le Marquis*. At first she had tried to deny all knowledge of *M. le Marquis'* whereabouts.

"I can assure *M. le Commissaire* that I do not know," she had persisted quietly, even though her heart was beating so rapidly in her bosom that she felt as if she must choke.

"Call me Citizen Commissary," Lebel had riposted curtly. "I should take it as a proof that your aristocratic sentiments are not so deep-rooted as they appear to be."

"Yes, citizen!" murmured Lucile under her breath.

Then the other one, he with the pale eyes and the slender white hands, leaned forward over the desk, and the poor girl felt as if a mighty and unseen force were holding her tight, so tight that she could neither move nor breathe nor turn her gaze away from those pale, compelling eyes. In the remote corner little Josephine was whimpering, and Étienne's big, dark eyes were fixed bravely upon his eldest sister.

"There, there, little citizeness," the awful man said in a voice that sounded low and almost caressing. "There is nothing to be frightened of. No one is going to hurt you or your little family. We only want you to be reasonable. You have promised to your former employer that you would never tell any one of his whereabouts. Well, we don't ask you to tell us anything. All that we want you to do is to write a letter to *M. le Marquis*—one that I myself will dictate to you. You have written to *M. le Marquis* before now, on business matters, have you not?"

"Yes, *monsieur*. Yes, citizen," stammered Lucile through her tears. "Father was bailiff to *M. le Marquis* until he became a cripple, and now I——"

"Do not write any letter, Lucile," Étienne suddenly broke in with forceful vehemence. "It is a trap set by these miscreants to entrap *M. le Marquis*."

There was a second's silence in the room

after this sudden outburst on the part of the lad. Then the man with the pale face said quietly:

"Citizen Lebel, order the removal of that boy. Let him be kept in custody till he has learned to hold his tongue."

But, before Lebel could speak to the two soldiers who were standing on guard at the door, Lucile had uttered a loud cry of agonized protest.

"No! No! *Monsieur!* That is—citizen!" she implored. "Do not take Étienne away. He will be silent. I promise you that he will be silent. Only do not take him away! Étienne, my little one!" she added, turning her tear-filled eyes to her brother. "I entreat thee to hold thy tongue!"

The others, too, clung to Étienne, and the lad, awed and subdued, relapsed into silence.

"Now then," resumed Lebel roughly after a while. "Let us get on with this business. I am sick to death of it. It has lasted far too long already."

He fixed his bloodshot, protruding eyes upon Lucile and continued gruffly:

"Now listen to me, my wench, for this is going to be my last word. Citizen Chauvelin here has already been very lenient with you by allowing this letter business. If I had my way, I'd make you speak here and now. As it is, you either sit down and write the letter at Citizen Chauvelin's dictation at once, or I send you with that impudent brother of yours and your imbecile father to jail, on a charge of treason against the state, for aiding and abetting the enemies of the republic. And you know what the consequences of such a charge usually are. The other two brats will go to a House of Correction, there to be detained during the pleasure of the Committee of Public Safety. That is my last word," he reiterated fiercely. "Now, which is it to be?"

He paused, and the girl's wan cheeks turned the color of lead. She moistened her lips once or twice with her tongue; beads of perspiration appeared at the roots of her hair. She gazed helplessly at her tormentors, not daring to look on those three huddled-up little figures there in the corner.

A few seconds sped away in silence. The man with the pale eyes rose and pushed his chair away. He went to the window and stood there with his back to the room, those slender white hands of his clasped behind him. Neither the commissary nor the girl appeared to interest him further. He was just gazing out of the window.

The other was still sprawling beside the desk, his large, coarse hand—how different his hands were—was beating a devil's tatoo upon the arm of his chair.

AFTER a few minutes Lucile made a violent effort to compose herself, wiped the moisture from her pallid forehead and dried the tears which still hung upon her lashes. Then she rose from her chair and walked resolutely up to the desk.

"I will write the letter," she said simply.

Lebel gave a snort of satisfaction, but the other did not move from his position near the window. The boy, Étienne, had uttered a cry of passionate protest.

"Do not give *M. le Marquis* away, Lucile!" he said hotly. "I am not afraid to die."

But Lucile had made up her mind. How could she do otherwise with these awful threats hanging over them all? She and Étienne and poor father gone, and the two young ones in one of those awful Houses of Correction, where children were taught to hate the Church, to shun the Sacraments and to blaspheme God!

"What am I to write?" she asked dully, resolutely closing her ears against her brother's protest.

Lebel pushed pen, ink and paper toward her, and she sat down ready to begin.

"Write!" now came in a curt command from the man at the window.

And Lucile wrote at his dictation:

MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS:

We are in grave trouble. My brother Étienne and I have been arrested on a charge of treason. This means the guillotine for us and for poor father, who can no longer speak. The two little ones are to be sent to one of those dreadful Houses of Correction, where children are taught to deny God and to blaspheme. You alone can save us, *M. le Marquis!* I beg you on my knees to do it. The citizen commissary here says that you have in your possession certain papers which are of great value to the state and that, if I can persuade you to give these up, Étienne, father and I and the little ones will be left unmolested. *M. le Marquis*, you once said that you could never adequately repay my poor father for all his devotion in your service. You can do it now, *M. le Marquis*, by saving us all. I will be at the château a week from today. I entreat you, *M. le Marquis*, to come to me then and to bring the papers with you. Or,

if you can devise some other means of sending the papers to me, I will obey your behests.

I am, *M. le Marquis*,
Your faithful and devoted servant,
LUCILE CLAMETTE.

The pen dropped from the unfortunate girl's fingers. She buried her face in her hands and sobbed convulsively. The children were silent, awed and subdued—tired out, too. Only Étienne's dark eyes were fixed upon his sister with a look of mute reproach.

Lebel had made no attempt to interrupt the flow of his colleague's dictation. Only once or twice did a hastily smothered "What the ——!" of astonishment escape his lips. Now, when the letter was finished and duly signed, he drew it to him and strewed the sand over it. Chauvelin, more impassive than ever, was once more gazing out of the window.

"How are the *ci-devant* aristos to get this letter?" the commissary asked.

"It must be put in the hollow tree which stands by the side of the stable gate at Montorgueil," whispered Lucile.

"And the aristos will find it there?"

"Yes. *M. le Vicomte* goes there once or twice a week to see if there is anything there from one of us."

"They are in hiding somewhere close by, then?"

But to this the girl gave no reply. Indeed, she felt as if any word now might choke her.

"Well, no matter where they are," the inhuman wretch resumed with brutal cynicism, "we've got them now—both of them. *Marquis? Vicomte?*" he added and spat on the ground to express his contempt of such titles. "Citizen Montorgueil, father and son—that's all they are! And as such they'll walk up in state to make their bow to *Mme. la Guillotine!*"

"May we go now?" stammered Lucile through her tears.

Lebel nodded in assent, and the girl rose and turned to walk toward the door. She called to the children, and the little ones clustered round her skirts like chicks around the mother hen. Only Étienne remained aloof, wrathful against his sister for what he deemed her treachery.

"Women have no sense of honor!" he muttered to himself with all the pride of conscious manhood.

But Lucile felt more than ever like a bird who is vainly trying to evade the clutches of a fowler. She gathered the two little ones around her. Then, with a cry like a wounded doe, she ran quickly out of the room.

II

AS SOON as the sound of the children's footsteps had died away down the corridor, Lebel turned with a grunt to his still silent companion.

"And now, Citizen Chauvelin," he said roughly, "perhaps you will be good enough to explain what is the meaning of all this tomfoolery."

"Tomfoolery, citizen?" queried the other blandly. "What tomfoolery, pray?"

"Why, about those papers!" growled Lebel savagely. "Curse you for an interfering busybody! It was I who got information that those pestilential aristos, the Montorgueils, far from having fled the country, are in hiding somewhere in my district. I could have made the girl give up their hiding-place pretty soon without any help from you. What right had you to interfere, I should like to know?"

"You know quite well what right I had, Citizen Lebel," replied Chauvelin with perfect composure. "The right conferred upon me by the Committee of Public Safety, of whom I am still an unworthy member. They sent me down here to lend you a hand in an investigation which is of grave importance to them."

"I know that!" retorted Lebel sulkily. "But why have you invented the story of the papers?"

"It is no invention, citizen," rejoined Chauvelin with slow emphasis. "The papers do exist. They are in the possession of the *ci-devant* Montorgueils, father and son. To capture the two aristos would be not only a blunder but also criminal folly, unless we can lay hands on the papers at the same time."

"But what in Satan's name are those papers?" ejaculated Lebel with a fierce oath.

"Think, Citizen Lebel! Think!" was Chauvelin's cool rejoinder. "Methinks you might arrive at a pretty shrewd guess."

Then, as the other's bluster and bounce suddenly collapsed under his colleague's calm, accusing gaze, the latter continued with impressive deliberation:

"The papers which the two aristos have

in their possession, citizen, are receipts for money, for bribes paid to various members of the Committee of Public Safety by royalist agents for the overthrow of our glorious republic. You know all about them, do you not?"

While Chauvelin spoke, a look of furtive terror had crept into Lebel's eyes; his cheeks became the color of lead. But even so he tried to keep up an air of incredulity and of amazement.

"I?" he exclaimed. "What do you mean, Citizen Chauvelin? What should I know about it?"

"Some of those receipts are signed with your name, Citizen Lebel," riposted Chauvelin forcefully. "Bah!" he added, and a tone of savage contempt crept into his even, calm voice now. "Henriot, Foucquier, Ducros and the whole gang of you are in it up to the neck: trafficking with our enemies, trading with England, taking bribes from every quarter for working against the safety of the republic. Ah, if I had my way, I would let the hatred of those aristos take its course. I would let the Montorgueils and the whole pack of royalist agents publish those infamous proofs of your treachery and of your baseness to the entire world, and send the whole lot of you to the guillotine!"

He had spoken with so much concentrated fury and the hatred and contempt expressed in his pale eyes were so fierce, that an involuntary ice-cold shiver ran down the length of Lebel's spine. But even so he would not give in; he tried to sneer and to keep up something of his former surly defiance.

"Bah!" he exclaimed, and with a lowering glance he gave hatred for hatred and contempt for contempt. "What can you do? An I am not mistaken, there is no more discredited man in France today than the unsuccessful tracker of the Scarlet Pimpernel."

The taunt went home. It was Chauvelin's turn now to lose countenance, to pale to the lips. The glow of virtuous indignation died out of his eyes; his look became furtive and shamed.

"You are right, Citizen Lebel," he said calmly after a while. "Recriminations between us are out of place. I am a discredited man, as you say. Perhaps it would have been better if the Committee had sent me long ago to expiate my failures on the guillotine. I should at least not have suffered, as I am suffering now, daily, hourly, humiliation at thought of the triumph of an enemy whom I hate with a passion that consumes my very soul. But do not let us speak of me," he went on quietly. "There are graver affairs at stake just now than mine own."

Lebel said nothing more for the moment. Perhaps he was satisfied at the success of his taunt, even though the terror within his craven soul still caused the cold shiver to course up and down his spine. Chauvelin had once more turned to the window; his gaze was fixed upon the distance far away.

The window gave on the north. That way, in a straight line, lay Calais, Boulogne, England—where he had been made to suffer such bitter humiliation at the hands of his elusive enemy. Far out to the west lay Nantes, the scene of his latest defeat, and immediately before him was Paris, where the very walls seemed to echo that mocking laugh of the daring Englishman which would haunt him even to his grave.

Lebel, unnerved by his colleague's silence, broke in gruffly at last:

"Well then, citizen," he said with a feeble attempt at another sneer, "if you are not thinking of sending us all to the guillotine just yet, perhaps you will be good enough to explain just how the matter stands?"

"Fairly simply, alas!" replied Chauvelin dryly. "The two Montorgueils, father and son, under assumed names, were the royalist agents who succeeded in suborning men such as you, citizen, and the whole gang of you. We have tracked them down to this district, have confiscated their lands and ransacked the old château for valuables and so on. Two days later the first of a series of pestilential anonymous letters reached the Committee of Public Safety, threatening the publication of a whole series of compromising documents if the Marquis and the Vicomte de Montorgueil were in any way molested and if all the Montorgueil property is not immediately restored."

"I suppose it is quite certain that those receipts and documents do exist?" suggested Lebel.

"Perfectly certain. One of the receipts, signed by Henriot, was sent as a specimen."

"My ——!" ejaculated Lebel and wiped the cold sweat from his brow.

"Yes, you'll all want help from somewhere," retorted Chauvelin coolly. "From above or from below, if the people get to know what miscreants you are. I do believe," he added with a vicious snap of his thin lips, "that they would cheat the guillotine of you and in the end drag you out of the tumbrils and tear you to pieces limb from limb!"

Once more that look of furtive terror crept into the commissary's bloodshot eyes.

"Thank the Lord," he muttered, "that we were able to get hold of the wench Clamette!"

"At my suggestion," retorted Chauvelin curtly. "I always believe in threatening the weak if you want to coerce the strong. The Montorgueils can not resist the wench's appeal. Even if they do at first, we can apply the screw by clapping one of the young ones in jail. Within a week we shall have those papers, Citizen Lebel. And, if in the meanwhile no one commits a further blunder, we can close the trap on the Montorgueils without further trouble."

Lebel said nothing more, and after a while Chauvelin went back to the desk, picked up the letter which poor Lucile had written and watered with her tears, folded it deliberately and slipped it into the inner pocket of his coat.

"What are you going to do?" queried Lebel anxiously.

"Drop this letter into the hollow tree by the side of the stable gate at Montorgueil," replied Chauvelin simply.

"What?" exclaimed the other. "Yourself?"

"Why, of course! Think you I would entrust such an errand to another living soul?"

III

SEVERAL hours later, when the two children had had their dinner and had settled down to play in the garden and father had been cozily tucked up for his afternoon sleep, Lucile called her brother Étienne to her. The boy had not spoken to her since that terrible time spent in the presence of those two awful men. He had eaten no dinner, only sat glowering, staring straight out before him, from time to time throwing a look of burning reproach upon his sister. Now, when she called to him, he tried to run away and was half-way up the stairs before she could seize hold of him.

"Étienne, *mon petit!*" she implored as her arms closed around his shrinking figure.

"Let me go, Lucile!" the boy pleaded obstinately.

"*Mon petit*, listen to me!" she pleaded. "All is not lost, if you will stand by me."

"All is lost, Lucile!" Étienne cried, striving to keep back a flood of passionate tears. "Honor is lost. Your treachery has disgraced us all. If *M. le Marquis* and *M. le Vicomte* are brought to the guillotine, their blood will be upon our heads."

"Upon mine alone, my little Étienne," she said sadly. "But God alone can judge me. It was a terrible alternative: *M. le Marquis*—or you and Valentine and little Josephine and poor father, who is so helpless! But don't let us talk of it all. All is not lost, I am sure. The last time that I spoke with *M. le Marquis*—it was in February, do you remember?—he was full of hope and, oh, so kind! Well, he told me then that, if ever I or any of us here were in such grave trouble that we did not know where to turn, one of us was to put on our very oldest clothes, look as like a barefooted beggar as we could and then go to Paris to a place called the Cabaret de la Liberté, in the Rue Christine. There we are to ask for the Citizen Rateau, and we are to tell him all our troubles, whatever they are. Well, we are in such trouble now, *mon petit*, that we don't know where to turn. Put on the very oldest clothes, little one, and run barefooted into Paris, find the Citizen Rateau and tell him just what has happened: the letter which they have forced me to write, the threats which they held over me if I did not write it—everything. Dost hear?"

Already the boy's eyes were glowing. The thought that he individually could do something to retrieve the awful shame of his sister's treachery spurred him to activity. It needed no persuasion on Lucile's part to induce him to go. She made him put on some old clothes and stuffed a piece of bread and cheese into his breeches pocket.

It was close upon eight kilometers to Paris, but that run was one of the happiest which Étienne had ever made. And he did it barefooted, too, feeling neither fatigue nor soreness, despite the hardness of the

road after a three weeks' drought which had turned mud into hard cakes and ruts into fissures which tore the lad's feet till they bled.

He did not reach the Cabaret de la Liberté till nightfall, and, when he got there, he hardly dared to enter. The filth, the squalor, the hoarse voices which rose from that cellar-like place below the level of the street repelled the country-bred lad. Were it not for the desperate urgency of his errand, he never would have dared to enter. As it was, the fumes of alcohol and steaming, dirty clothes nearly choked him, and he could scarcely stammer the name of Citizen Rateau when a gruff voice presently demanded his purpose.

He realized now how tired he was and how hungry. He had not thought to pause in order to consume the small provision of bread and cheese with which thoughtful Lucile had provided him. Now he was ready to faint when a loud guffaw, which echoed from one end of the horrible place to the other, greeted his timid request.

"Citizen Rateau!" the same gruff voice called out hilariously. "Why, there he is! Here, citizen! There's a blooming aristo to see you."

Étienne turned his weary eyes to the corner which was being indicated to him. There he saw a huge creature sprawling across a bench, his long, powerful limbs stretched out before him. Citizen Rateau was clothed rather than dressed in a soiled shirt, ragged breeches and tattered stockings, with shoes down at heel and a faded crimson cap. His face looked congested and sunken about the eyes; he appeared to be asleep, for stertorous breathing came at intervals from between his parted lips. Every now and then a racking cough seemed to tear at his broad chest.

Étienne gave him one look, shuddering with horror despite himself at the aspect of this bloated wretch from whom salvation was to come. The whole place seemed to him hideous and loathsome in the extreme. What it all meant he could not understand. All that he knew was that this seemed like another hideous trap into which he and Lucile had fallen and that he must fly from it—fly at all costs, before he betrayed *M. le Marquis* still further to these drink-sodden brutes. Another moment and he feared that he might faint. The din of a bibulous song rang in his ears; the reek of alcohol turned him giddy and sick, He had only just enough strength to turn and totter back into the open. There his senses reeled; the lights in the houses opposite began to dance wildly before his eyes—and he remembered nothing more.

IV

THERE is nothing now in the whole countryside quite so desolate and forlorn as the château of Montorgueil, with its once magnificent park, now overgrown with weeds, its encircling walls broken down, its terraces devastated and its stately gates rusty and torn.

Just by the side of what was known in happier times as the stable gate there stands a hollow tree. It is not inside the park but just outside, and it shelters the narrow lane which skirts the park walls against the blaze of the afternoon sun.

Its beneficent shade is a favorite spot for an afternoon siesta, for there is a bit of green sward under the tree and all along the side of the road. But, as the shades of evening gather in, the lane is usually deserted, shunned by the neighboring peasantry on account of its eery loneliness, so different from the former bustle which used to reign around the park gates when *M. le Marquis* and his family were still in residence. Nor does the lane lead anywhere, for it is a mere loop which gives on the main road at either end.

Henri de Montorgueil chose a peculiarly dark night early in September for one of his periodical visits to the hollow tree. It was close on nine o'clock when he passed stealthily down the lane, keeping close to the park wall. A soft rain was falling, the first since the prolonged drought, and, though it made the road heavy and slippery in places, it helped to deaden the sound of the young man's furtive footsteps.

The air, except for the patter of the rain, was absolutely still. Henri de Montorgueil paused from time to time with neck craned forward, every sense on the alert, listening like any poor, hunted beast for the slightest sound which might betray the approach of danger.

As many a time before he reached the hollow tree in safety, felt for and found in the usual place the letter which the unfortunate girl, Lucile, had written to him. Then with it in his hand he turned to the

stable gate. It had long since ceased to be kept locked and bared. Pillaged and ransacked by order of the Committee of Public Safety, there was nothing left inside the park walls worth keeping under lock and key.

Henri slipped stealthily through the gates and made his way along the drive. Every stone, every nook and cranny of his former home was familiar to him, and he turned into a shed where in former times wheelbarrows and garden tools were wont to be kept. Now it was full of débris, lumber of every sort. A more safe or secluded spot could not be imagined. Henri crouched in the farthermost corner of the shed. Then from his belt he detached a small dark lantern, opened its shutter and with the aid of the tiny, dim light read the contents of the letter.

For a long while after that he remained quite still—as still as a man who has received a stunning blow on the head and has partly lost consciousness. The blow was indeed a staggering one. Lucile Clamette, with the invincible power of her own helplessness, was demanding the surrender of a weapon which had been a safeguard for the Montorgueils all this while. The papers which compromised a number of influential members of the Committee of Public Safety had been the most perfect arms of defense against persecution and spoilation.

And now these were to be given up. Oh, there could be no question of that! Even before consulting with his father, Henri knew that the papers would have to be given up. They were clever, those revolutionaries. The thought of holding innocent children as hostages could only have originated in minds attuned to the villainies of devils. But it was unthinkable that the children should suffer.

After a while the young man roused himself from the torpor into which the suddenness of this awful blow had plunged him. By the light of the lantern he scribbled a few words on a scrap of paper torn from his pocketbook.

My dear Lucile:

As you say, our debt to your father and to you all never could be adequately repaid. You and the children shall never suffer whilst we have the power to save you. You will find the papers in the receptacle you know of inside the chimney of what used to by my mother's boudoir. You will find the receptacle unlocked. One day before the term you name I myself will place the papers there for you. With them my father and I do give up our lives to save you and the little ones from the persecution of those fiends. May the good God guard you all.

He signed the letter with his initials, H. de M. Then he crept back to the gate and dropped the message into the hollow of the tree.

A quarter of an hour later Henri de Montorgueil was wending his way back to the hiding-place which had sheltered him and his father for so long. Silence and darkness soon held undisputed sway once more around the hollow tree. Even the rain had ceased its gentle pattering. From far away came the sound of a church bell striking the hour of ten. Then nothing more.

A few more minutes of absolute silence; then something dark and furtive began to move out of the long grass which bordered the roadside—something that in movement was almost like a snake. It dragged itself along close to the ground, making no sound as it moved. Soon it reached the hollow tree, rose to the height of a man and flattened itself against the tree trunk. Then it put out a hand, felt for the hollow receptacle and groped for the missive which Henri de Montorgueil had dropped in there a while ago.

The next moment a tiny ray of light gleamed through the darkness like a star. A small, almost fragile figure of a man, dressed in the mud-stained clothes of a country yokel, had turned up the shutter of a small lantern. By its flickering light he deciphered the letter which Henri de Montorgueil had written to Lucile Clamette.

"One day before the term you name I myself will place the papers there for you."

A sigh of satisfaction, quickly suppressed, came through his thin, colorless lips, and the light of the lantern caught the flash of triumph in his pale, inscrutable eyes.

Then the light was extinguished. Impenetrable darkness swallowed up that slender, mysterious figure again.

V

SIX days had gone by since Chauvelin had delivered his cruel "either—or" to poor little Lucile Clamette; three since he had found Henri de Montorgueil's reply to the girl's appeal in the hollow of

the tree. Since then he had made a careful investigation of the château, and soon he was able to settle it in his own mind as to which room had been the boudoir of *Madame la Marquise* in the past. It was a small apartment, having direct access to the first landing of the staircase, and the one window gave on the rose garden at the back of the house. Inside the monumental hearth, at an arm's length up the wide chimney, a receptacle had been contrived in the brickwork, with a small iron door which opened and closed with a secret spring. Chauvelin, whose nefarious calling had rendered him proficient in such matters, had soon mastered the workings of that spring. He could now open and close the iron door at will.

Up to a late hour on the sixth night of this weary waiting the receptacle inside the chimney was still empty. That night Chauvelin had determined to spend at the château. He could not have rested elsewhere.

Even his colleague, Lebel, could not know what the possession of those papers would mean to the discredited agent of the Committee of Public Safety. With them in his hands, he could demand rehabilitation; he could purchase immunity from those sneers which had been so galling to his arrogant soul—sneers which had become more and more marked, more and more unendurable, above all, more and more menacing as he piled up failure on failure with every encounter with the Scarlet Pimpernel.

Immunity and rehabilitation! This would mean that he could once more measure his wits and his power with that audacious enemy who had brought about his downfall.

"In the name of Satan, bring us those papers!" Robespierre himself had cried with unwonted passion ere he sent him out on this important mission. "None of us could stand the scandal of such disclosures. It would mean absolute ruin for us all."

And Chauvelin that night, as soon as the shades of evening had drawn in, took up his stand in the château in the small inner room which was contiguous to the boudoir.

Here he sat beside the open window for hour upon hour, his every sense on the alert, listening for the first footfall upon the gravel path below. Though the hours went by leaden-footed, he was neither excited nor anxious. The Clamette family was such a precious hostage that the Montorgueils were bound to comply with Lucile's demand for the papers by every dictate of honor and of humanity.

"While we have those people in our power," Chauvelin had reiterated to himself more than once during the course of his long vigil, "even that meddlesome Scarlet Pimpernel can do nothing to save those cursed Montorgueils."

The night was dark and still. Not a breath of air stirred the branches of the trees or the shrubberies in the park; any footsteps, however wary, must echo through that perfect and absolute silence. Chauvelin's keen, pale eyes tried to pierce the gloom in the direction whence in all probability the aristo would come. Vaguely he wondered if it would be Henri de Montorgueil or the old marquis himself who would bring the papers.

"Bah! Whichever one it is," he muttered, "we can easily get the other, once those abominable papers are in our hands. And, even if both the aristos escape," he added mentally, " 'tis no matter, once we have the papers."

Far away a distant church bell struck the midnight hour. The stillness of the air had become oppressive. A kind of torpor born of intense fatigue lulled the Terrorist's senses to somnolence. His head fell forward on his breast.

VI

SUDDENLY a shiver of excitement went right through him. He was fully awake now, with glowing eyes wide open and the icy calm of perfect confidence ruling every nerve. The sound of stealthy footsteps had reached his ear.

He could see nothing, either outside or in, but his fingers felt for the pistol which he carried in his belt. The aristo was evidently alone; only one solitary footstep was approaching the château.

Chauvelin had left ajar the door which gave on the boudoir. The staircase was on the other side of that fateful room, and the door leading to that was closed. A few minutes of tense expectancy went by. Then through the silence there came the sound of furtive footsteps on the stairs, the creaking of a loose board and finally the stealthy opening of the door.

In all his adventurous career Chauvelin had never felt so calm. His heart beat quite evenly, and his senses were undisturbed by the slightest tingling of his nerves. The stealthy sounds in the next room brought the movements of the aristo perfectly clearly before his mental vision. The latter was carrying a small dark lantern. As soon as he entered, he flashed its light about the room. Then he deposited the lantern on the floor, close beside the hearth, and started to feel up the chimney for the hidden receptacle.

Chauvelin watched him now as a cat watches a mouse, savoring these few moments of anticipated triumph. Noiselessly he pushed open the door which gave on the boudoir. By the feeble light of the lantern on the ground he could only see the vague outline of the aristo's back, bending forward to his task, but a thrill went through him as he saw a bundle of papers lying on the ground close by.

Everything was ready; the trap was set. Here was a complete victory at last. It was obviously the young Vicomte de Montorgueil who had come to do the deed. His head was up the chimney even now. The old marquis's back would have looked narrower and more fragile. Chauvelin held his breath; then he gave a sharp little cough and took the pistol from his belt.

The sound caused the aristo to turn. The next moment a loud and merry laugh roused the dormant echoes of the old château, and a pleasant drawling voice said in English:

"I am demmed if this is not my dear old friend M. Chambertin! Zounds, sir! Who'd have thought of meeting you here!"

Had a cannon suddenly exploded at Chauvelin's feet, he would have felt less unnerved. For the space of two heartbeats he stood there, his eyes glued on his arch-enemy, that execrated Scarlet Pimpernel, whose mocking glance, even through the intervening gloom, seemed to have deprived him of consciousness. But that phase of helplessness only lasted for a moment; the next, all the marvelous possibilities of this encounter flashed through the Terrorist's keen mind.

Everything was ready. The trap was set. The unfortunate Clamettes were still the bait which now would bring a far more noble quarry into the mesh than ever he—Chauvelin—had dared to hope.

He raised his pistol, ready to fire. But already Sir Percy Blakeney was on him, and, with a swift movement which the other was too weak to resist, he wrenched the weapon from his enemy's grasp.

"Why, how hasty you are, my dear M. Chambertin," he said lightly. "Surely you are not in such a hurry to put a bullet into me!"

The position now was one which would have made even a braver man than Chauvelin quake. He stood alone and unarmed in face of an enemy from whom he could expect no mercy. But, even so, his first thought was not of escape. He had not only appraised his own danger but also the immense power which he held while the Clamettes remained as hostages in the hands of his colleague, Lebel.

"You have me at a disadvantage, Sir Percy," he said, speaking every whit as coolly as his foe. "But only momentarily. You can kill me, of course, but, if I do not return from this expedition, not only safe and sound but with a certain packet of papers in my hands, my colleague, Lebel, has instructions to proceed at once against the girl, Clamette, and the whole family."

"I know that well enough," rejoined Sir Percy with a quaint laugh. "I know what venemous reptiles you and those of your kidney are. You certainly do owe your life at the present moment to the unfortunate girl whom you are persecuting with such infamous callousness."

Chauvelin drew a sigh of relief. The situation was shaping itself more to his satisfaction already. Through the gloom he could vaguely discern the Englishman's massive form standing a few paces away, one hand buried in his breeches pocket, the other still holding the pistol. On the ground close by the hearth was the small lantern, and in its dim light the packet of papers gleamed white and tempting in the darkness. Chauvelin's keen eyes had fastened on it and saw the form of receipt for money with Henriot's signature, which he recognized, on the top.

He himself had never felt so calm. The only thing he could regret was that he was alone. Half a dozen men now, and this impudent foe could indeed be brought to his knees. And this time there would be no risks taken, no chances for escape. Somehow it seemed to Chauvelin as if something of the Scarlet Pimpernel's audacity and

foresight had gone from him. As he stood there, looking broad and physically powerful, there was something wavering and undecided in his attitude, as if the edge had been taken off his former recklessness and enthusiasm. He had brought the compromising papers here and had no doubt helped the Montorgueils to escape. But, while Lucile Clamette and her family were under the eye of Lebel, no amount of impudence could force a successful bargaining.

IT WAS Chauvelin now who appeared the more keen and the more alert. The Englishman seemed undecided what to do next and remained silent, toying with the pistol. He even smothered a yawn. Chauvelin saw his opportunity. With the quick movement of a cat pouncing upon a mouse, he stooped and seized that packet of papers and would then and there have made a dash for the door with them; only that, as he seized the packet, the string which held it together gave way, and the papers were scattered all over the floor.

Receipts for money? Compromising letters? No! Blank sheets of paper, all of them—all except the one which had lain tantalizingly on the top—the one receipt signed by Citizen Henriot. Sir Percy laughed lightly.

"Did you really think, my good friend," he said, "that I would be such a demmed fool as to place my best weapon so readily to your hand?"

"Your best weapon, Sir Percy?" retorted Chauvelin with a sneer. "What use is it to you while we hold Lucile Clamette?"

"While I hold Lucile Clamette, you mean, my dear M. Chambertin," riposted Blakeney with elaborate blandness.

"You hold Lucile Clamette? Bah! I defy you to drag a whole family like that out of our clutches. The man a cripple, the children helpless! And you think they can escape our vigilance when all our men are warned! How do you think they are going to get across the river, Sir Percy, when every bridge is closely watched? How will they get across Paris when at every gate our men are on the lookout for them?"

"They can't do it, my dear M. Chambertin," rejoined Sir Percy blandly, "else I were not here."

Then, as Chauvelin—fuming, irritated despite himself as he always was when he encountered that impudent Englishman—shrugged his shoulders in token of contempt, Blakeney's powerful grasp suddenly clutched his arm.

"Let us understand one another, my good M. Chambertin," he said coolly. "Those unfortunate Clamettes, as you say, are too helpless and too numerous to smuggle across Paris with any chance of success. Therefore I look to you to take them under your protection. They are all stowed away comfortably at this moment in a conveyance which I have provided for them. That conveyance is waiting at the bridge-head now. We could not cross without your help; we could not get across Paris without your august presence and your tricolor scarf of office. So you are coming with us, my dear M. Chambertin," he continued, and, with force which was quite irresistible, he began to drag his enemy after him toward the door. "You are going to sit in that conveyance with the Clamettes, and I myself will have the honor to drive you. And at every bridge-head you will show your pleasing countenance and your scarf of office to the guard and demand free passage for yourself and your family, as a representative member of the Committee of Public Safety.

"And then we'll enter Paris by the Porte d'Ivry and leave it by the Batignolles, and everywhere your charming presence will lull the guards' suspicions to rest. I pray you, come! There is no time to consider! At noon tomorrow, without a moment's grace, my friend, Sir Andrew Ffoulkes, who has the papers in his possession, will dispose of them as he thinks best unless I myself claim them from him."

While he spoke, he continued to drag his enemy along with him with an assurance and an impudence which was past belief. Chauvelin was trying to collect his thoughts, a whirl of conflicting plans were running riot in his mind. The Scarlet Pimpernel in his power! At any point on the road he could deliver him up to the nearest guard and then still hold the Clamettes and demand the papers . . .

"Too late, my dear M. Chambertin!" Sir Percy's mocking voice broke in as if divining his thoughts. "You do not know where to find my friend, Ffoulkes, and at noon tomorrow, if I do not arrive to claim those papers, there will not be a single ragamuffin in Paris who will not be crying

your shame and that of your precious colleagues upon the housetops."

Chauvelin's whole nervous system was writhing with the feeling of impotence. Mechanically, unresisting now, he followed his enemy down the main staircase of the château and out through the wide open gates. He could not bring himself to believe that he had been so completely foiled—that this impudent adventurer had him once more in the hollow of his hand.

"In the name of Satan, bring us back those papers!" Robespierre had commanded, and now he—Chauvelin—was left in a maze of doubt, and the vital alternative was hammering in his brain, "The Scarlet Pimpernel—or those papers." Which, in Satan's name, was the more important? Passion whispered, "The Scarlet Pimpernel!" But common sense and the future of his party, the whole future of the Revolution mayhap, demanded those compromising papers. And all the while he followed that relentless enemy through the avenues of the park and down the lonely lane. Overhead the trees of the forest of Sucy, nodding in a gentle breeze, seemed to mock his perplexity.

He had not arrived at a definite decision when the river came in sight and a carriage-lantern threw a shaft of dim light through the mist-laden air. Now he felt as if he were in a dream. He was thrust unresisting into a closed chaise, wherein he felt the presence of several other people—children and an old man who was muttering ceaselessly. As in a dream he answered questions at the bridge to a guard whom he knew well.

"You know me: Armand Chauvelin, of the Committee of Public Safety!"

As in a dream he heard the curt words of command—

"Pass on, in the name of the republic!"

And all the while the thought hammered in his brain:

"Something *must* be done! This is impossible! This can not be! It is not I—Chauvelin—who am sitting here, helpless, unresisting. It is not that impudent Scarlet Pimpernel who is sitting there before me on the box, driving me to utter humiliation!"

And yet it was all true. All real. The Clamette children were sitting in front of him, clinging to Lucile, terrified of him even now. The old man was beside him—imbecile and ununderstanding. The boy, Étienne, was up on the box next to that audacious adventurer, whose broad back appeared to Chauvelin like a rock on which all his hopes and dreams must forever be shattered.

The chaise rattled triumphantly through the Batignolles. It was then broad daylight. A brilliant early Autumn day after the rains. The sun, the keen air, all mocked Chauvelin's helplessness, his humiliation. Long before noon they passed St. Denis. Here the chaise turned off the main road, halted at a small wayside house—nothing more than a cottage. After which everything seemed more dreamlike than ever. All that Chauvelin remembered of it afterward was that he was once more alone in a room with his enemy, who had demanded his signature to a number of safe-conducts ere he finally handed over the packet of papers to him.

"How do I know that they are all here?" he heard himself vaguely muttering while his trembling fingers handled that precious packet.

"That's just it!" his tormentor retorted airily. "You don't know. I don't know myself," he added with a light laugh. "And personally I don't see how either of us can possibly ascertain. In the meanwhile I must bid you *au revoir*, my dear M. Chambertin. I am sorry that I can not provide you with a conveyance, and you will have to walk several kilometers ere you meet one, I fear me. We, in the meanwhile, will be well on our way to Dieppe, where my yacht, the *Day-Dream*, lies at anchor, and I do not think that it will be worth your while to try to overtake us. I thank you for the safe-conducts. They will make our journey exceedingly pleasant. Shall I give your regards to M. le Marquis de Montorgueil or to *M. le Vicomte?* They are on board the *Day-Dream*, you know. Oh! I was forgetting! Lady Blakeney desired to be remembered to you."

The next moment he was gone. Chauvelin, standing at the window of the wayside house, saw Sir Percy Blakeney once more mount the box of the chaise. This time he had Sir Andrew Ffoulkes beside him. The Clamette family were huddled together—happy and free—inside the vehicle. After which there was the usual clatter of horses' hoofs, the creaking of wheels, the rattle of chains. Chauvelin

saw and heard nothing of that. All that he saw at the last was Sir Percy's slender hand waving him a last adieu.

After which he was left alone with his thoughts. The packet of papers was in his hand. He fingered it, felt its crispness, clutched it with a fierce gesture, which was followed by a long-drawn-out sigh of intense bitterness.

No one would ever know what it had cost him to obtain these papers. No one would ever know how much he had sacrificed of pride, revenge and hate in order to save a few shreds of his own party's honor.

WEST AFRICA AND "FUNKITIS"

by THOMAS S. MILLER

THEY call it the White Man's Grave, that western bulge in the pear-shape of Africa that comprises the Gold Coast, Ivory Coast and, ominous term, the Fever Coast. Fever Coast! And, as if that name were not sufficiently frightening, the young official or the young man going to a trading-station on the Niger has to run the gantlet of horrible tales of native deviltry and the insidious ways of fever. It is a popular "sport" on the out voyage for the ship's officers and "old coasters" to pump these tales into the newcomer, and by dint of insistence and gravity of expression to break through his morale, so that by the time the ship noses into the exotic, fetid Niger delta and dumps him into the silent, brooding, reeking, stagnant mangrove swamps, his nerves are tensioned to the worst.

Perhaps his first sight is an emaciated white being carried aboard ship, to die at sea and spare the colony's mortality statistics. Then there is bound to be an idle white around to show him the sights. He will be taken to a large shed where kit-bags and steamer-trunks are piled high and bear the appalling epitaph, "Effects of J—, and R— and M—, deceased." He may be a bidder at one of the pathetic little auctions of these effects and do his share in boosting the prices, for the benefit of a mother or widow and orphans over the sea.

He lies around that reeking swamp waiting orders, nervously expectant of his "first dose," his baptismal fever which the few whites in envy of his beefy cheeks and obtrusive health take an unholy delight in predicting. If he manages to escape for a couple of weeks he becomes the target of serious mock-sympathy and doleful prophecy.

"If you're not inoculated before the heat and canned chop and the mosquitoes have enervated you it's a ten-to-one shot you croak. That's the way it was with S—. He——"

Here follows a distressing tale. He will take to surreptitiously popping a clinical thermometer in his mouth.

"Man," he is told, "you've got fever, only you don't know it."

His life seems to hang on the verdict of the mercury. He is victimized by a popular "joke"; he is given an unreliable thermometer that adds a few degrees to the actual condition, or the mercury has been surreptitiously boosted. Come orders for him to proceed to a certain station. Instantly he is the focus of long, commiserating faces and cruel sympathy.

"That's the rottenest hole in Nigeria. J— died up there, and when R— went up to relieve B— all he found of B— was a mound in the swamp. The niggers said he died of fever, but—it's the Jekri tribe up there. They're an ugly bunch to deal with."

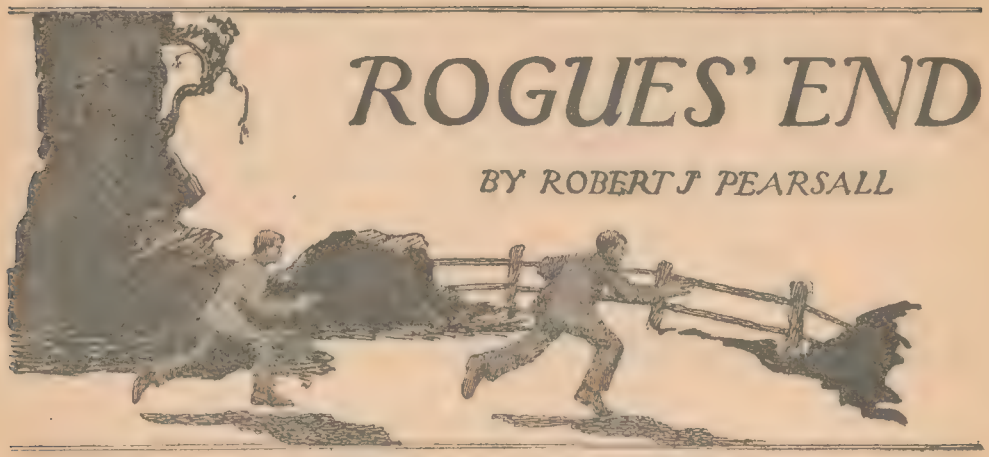
He gets into a small launch or canoe and goes off with blacks whom he can not talk to, into a strange world of dense forests and glassy waters—strange vegetation, strange animals, strange skies. He has long, unfilled hours in which to brood himself into "funkitis." Eventually he arrives at the trading-station, which is probably a rat-infested, blackened and ancient hulk moored to the jungle. The exile there is pitifully relieved to see him, does not try to disguise the fact that to go home is to go from hell to heaven, and with a view of "putting him next" morbidly paints the treachery of the natives, the deadliness of the rainy season, the awfulness of the loneliness, the insidious peculiarities and varieties of fever.

"Are you well-stocked in quinine? You'd better see that your nigger tastes your chow before you eat; not that that is much of a safeguard, for he'll poison you himself if he takes a fancy to the pants you're wearing. There's an interpreter here you'll have to watch pretty close. Don't present your back to him. He carries a knife in his loin-cloth and is a member of a secret society among the blacks that is set on ridding the country of us whites. You've got to be mighty careful, too, not to offend their *ju-ju* superstitions. Did you bring a deck of cards? If it hadn't been for solitaire I'd have gone crazy to know how to kill time. The white ants ate up my grips. D'ye want to sell me your kit-bag? Ten-to-one you won't have any use for it; this station is the rottenest on the Niger."

Next day the young man finds himself a lone white in a hostile world. Right there he starts marking off the calendar and counting the days to his relief and estimating his chances of living to see it. In a word he has "funkitis."

ROGUES' END

BY ROBERT J PEARSALL



Author of "Square," "Forty-Nine," etc.

SO, I understand, it is now called. Then it was Land's End—that pretty little precipice behind Cragcastle, where the rock falls sheer a hundred feet to the usually turbulent inlet. It lay at the narrow end of Breakneck Gorge, the upper end of which embraced the isolated freak of a house known as Cragcastle.

Lawyer Osborne had told me his recently deceased client, John Maxon, had built the house. And, in truth, its remoteness matched well with that eccentric provision in his will which had caused me, a stranger to everybody concerned, to take up a solitary residence in Cragcastle. And which, as a consequence, gave me the novel experience, on the first night of my stay there, of sitting across the table from a visitor whom I had just admitted and of whom I knew absolutely nothing—except that he intended to kill me.

"As soon as I read of your father's will," said this stranger, "I knew I had you."

He was and was not a man of prepossessing appearance. Superficially, he was handsome—well-formed, well-dressed, in the late forties, with quite regular features. A closer look, however, showed that he had a coldly sensual mouth and a brutal jaw and that his eyes were bloodshot. Crookdom and the underworld know such faces well; they are the natural result of years of vice and vicious profiteering working upon unusual intelligence as a basis. In my own person I should probably never have known this man well enough to have had him for an enemy.

"Your father probably figured," he went on, "that, if you were a coward, you wouldn't come back, and, if you changed into a man of passable courage, fit to be his son, you would. That was where he made a mistake. You came back, and still you're a coward. In fact, you came back because you're a coward. The money you stole was all gone, of course. And you figured I was probably dead or gone or broken mentally—which last I might well be—and you'd rather take a chance on facing me than a certainty of beachcombing it the rest of your life. A hundred thousand is worth taking a chance for—and even worth living in this mansion a year for. Though mainly—" his eyes flitted around the bare room—"it isn't fit to house ghosts in, and I hope yours will be—uncomfortable."

Herein his animosity caused him to exaggerate. True, the room in which we sat contained little else than our two chairs and the old oak table on which he had ordered me—somewhat to my amusement—to keep my hands. But that was because I'd carefully denuded it of everything else—sofas, chairs and the like—before he came in. Even while he urged the masquerade on me, Osborne had very earnestly warned me against personal danger, and I wanted to make quite sure that, if I had a caller, we should sit where we did.

Really, Cragcastle was a fine rambling—or rather climbing—old country house, quite comfortably supplied, even to a telephone and electric light and heat.

But I suppose Hardridge, as my visitor had named himself, referred mainly to its isolation, perched as it was five hundred yards up the seaward slope of Mount Tamalpais, five miles from the nearest village and four from the nearest house.

I replied that he was hard to please, since the setting couldn't be beaten for a murder.

And indeed Hardridge seemed outwardly to have every chance of accomplishing his intention. We both believed we were alone in the house; he had also made certain that I carried no weapon, and he himself held an effective-looking revolver in a clearly efficient hand. But he rested that hand on the table, with the gun pointed only in my general direction; so I could have concluded the scene at any moment. However, I didn't want to check him yet, there being too much I wanted to know to let slip a chance for knowledge.

On his part, up to now Hardridge had been enjoying himself perfectly well in gloating over my supposed helplessness. Assassins are usually rhetoricians as well—which fact has saved many lives.

"However," I added, "I'll probably be as comfortable as you, dead or alive. For, of course, there'll be no doubt as to who killed me. In fact, Osborne warned me against you before I came over. He's the executor, you know. You'll either hang or go to San Quentin——"

At that last word Hardridge's face went livid. His revolver flashed up, and for an instant I thought we were both dead men.

"—— you," he cried—it was his first touch of real passion—"cut that. Don't you dare——"

"For a longer term than I caused you to get last time," I went on steadily. "That'll be some consolation to my ghost."

Few men will fire in the middle of another man's sentence; that was one reason I completed mine. But there was another reason, too. His outburst partially confirmed a suspicion certain of his remarks and certain things in his appearance had given me—that he had been in prison and believed I had sent him there, and I wanted to prove or disprove it.

You see, I hadn't yet learned why he wanted to kill me.

"You think so," he rasped, lowering his revolver. "Well, you'll not have that comfort. Those of the ring that are left are back of me in this, and they'll see me through. Because you're a traitor doesn't prove all men are. Because I trusted you doesn't prove I'm altogether a fool, either. My getaway is safe. And I've money, too. Plenty of it. My *pro rata* in that pool you stole didn't break me by a long shot, though it did break most of the others. No, John Maxon, it's not prison but life that's ahead of me—life!" he exulted. "And for you, death and the fishes! For I'll drop you into the bay; I wouldn't poison the earth with you. Pah! Nothing but poisonous toadstools could come from your carcass."

It's not easy to hear oneself reviled so and make no defense, but I could hardly have opened my mouth without betraying that I wasn't the man he thought me. What I had gotten from Hardridge so far was not as much knowledge as food for conjecture. As for the smooth-talking lawyer, Osborne, who'd drawn me into the affair and got me to come to Cragcastle, he'd really said nothing about Hardridge but only warned me against danger in general.

Anyway, I placed little confidence in anything Osborne had told me. His appearance of candor had been too perfect to be genuine. I've learned to beware of the confessed rascal who looks me straight in the eye—there's always some other deviltry hidden behind his confession. This, I was sure, was Osborne's case. Although the will itself—John Maxon, Sr.'s, disposing of Cragcastle and the rest of the Maxon estate—was evidently genuine.

Osborne had calmly proposed to me, a stranger, a plan involving false impersonation, perjury, theft and perhaps a few other violations of the law. Profit, about fifty thousand each. I couldn't pick out the unsound spots in his proposal, except that he wasn't a man who would be content to divide such profits evenly. Naturally I wanted to see what was behind his proposal, and a week must necessarily elapse before I could sail on my own business; so I came in with him.

I came the more readily since I knew I really needed some amusment to take my mind off the absorbing problem into which I would presently plunge. It can hardly be hinted at in the present connection, but, if you remember that throne-shattering society, the Ko Lao Hui, the

part it played in the Chinese revolution and the part it would have played had its monstrous leader, Koshinga, lived, then you'll know what it meant when the word was passed to a few of us that Koshinga had not died. Or, rather, that a certain man had arisen in China who claimed to be Koshinga. China has been my hobby for years—and in face of this rumor I was chained to San Francisco for a week.

But, to return, within twenty-four hours after meeting Osborne I took up my solitary residence in Cragcastle, which was the peculiar punishment, test or merely eccentric requirement imposed by the senior Maxon's will upon his only son and heir. At ten o'clock of my first evening there Osborne's warning of immediate danger had been substantiated. In answer to a knock, I had opened the door, and Hardridge had thrust his revolver against my chest.

To his desire to punish before killing, to view my writhing soul as well as my writhing body, I probably owed my life. But I'd disappointed him in the first respect, and I felt he would soon seek the ultimate satisfaction.

"You're far from complimentary," I said. "Crook, coward, traitor—well, maybe I'm all three. But you haven't yet accused me of being a fool, and a fool I'd certainly be if I came and played with death in this house without seeing to my cards. And would a coward sit in such a game quite as calmly as I'm sitting unless he was sure he held the winning hand?"

I could tell by the violence of his rejoinder that these two questions had been troubling him all along.

"A cur like you—" he began.

I didn't feel like enduring any more; so I raised my right hand, that had never shifted from its first position on the table, a short three inches. The movement caught his attention, and his eyes shifted to the taut string that extended downward from my closed hand, and disappeared through a hole in the top of the table.

AND the sentence he had begun died on his lips. It was interesting to note how, like a weakening shadow, uncertainty flitted over his face. There's no threat so unnerving as a mystery.

I smiled.

"Puzzling, isn't it? If I were to lower the top—so—and curve it—so—it forms a question-mark. Well, I'll answer the question." I pulled the string taut again and caught his eyes and held them. "The other end of the string—" I measured my words—"is tied to the trigger of an automatic. The muzzle is about two inches from your vest. You may feel of it if you like.

"Oh," I added swiftly as almost brainless rage flashed into his eyes, "you'd be willing to die killing me, of course. But you can't; I've made sure of that. I can riddle you with bullets before you can get your revolver up, and the shock of the first one will destroy your aim. That's right; sit still— There—" as his left hand stole under the edge of the table—"touch it lightly, for your health's sake. You see. Now put your hand on the table again and shove your revolver across the table with your finger-tips, butt forward.

"Don't be foolish," I said reasonably as he hesitated. "Don't you understand I'm going to let you go and give you another chance for murder and myself another chance for entertainment?"

"Don't tell me that," rasped Hardridge roughly but obeying me nevertheless. "What's your game? Why don't you end it?"

Of course, I was playing the part of John Maxon, Jr., badly—that is, judging from Hardridge's conception of that gentleman. But to act as Hardridge suggested might involve unpleasant consequences, being myself without the law. Then, too, Hardridge was the only possible open sesame I knew of to the mystery of Osborne's real motive in persuading me into my present masquerade.

"We all change with the years," I said carelessly. "You may leave when you like."

I picked his revolver up, glanced at it, leveled it at him and arose.

"But next time—" I hinted.

"Next time," he grated harshly, "you get no chance for monkey-shines!"

"Thanks!" I said. "Good night!"

He got to his feet slowly and turned away slowly, glaring at me the while and plainly loath to go. The fury that was in his eyes, the fixed hatred that smoldered behind it, told me what a dangerous enemy I was loosing. And no wonder. For it was I,

according to his evident belief, who had wreaked havoc upon his life and condemned him to years of solitary brooding in a prison cell.

I recalled with an inward grimace how Osborne had shaken hands with me that morning and wished me well, knowing, as he must have known, that I was marked for the vengeance of this man. What chance had he really felt there was that he would ever see me again? Or had it really been his belief—and possibly his hope—that I'd kill Hardridge instead? Every thread of the tangle went back to the central mystery of Osborne's purpose in the matter.

I remembered that I had had to give some proof of my ability to take care of myself in a pinch before Osborne would open negotiations with me at all. Surely that indicated no desire to furnish Hardridge with a victim.

Mystified as I was, however, I think I did not permit Hardridge to guess it, and it was with an intent to carry the thing off lightly that I said to him—

"I suppose you'll haunt the house like a specter and all that sort of thing."

"By ——, you know I will," he shot viciously over his shoulder.

Letting him go was really taking a little flyer in Death, Limited, and I knew it.

Then happened the second peculiar thing of the night. Just as Hardridge put out his hand to open the door, in the silence following the cessation of our footsteps, I heard unmistakably the sound of some one else moving in the house.

It was difficult to believe, for early in the afternoon I had carefully barred all doors and windows. It could hardly be an accomplice of Hartridge, but, to cover the sound from him, I asked him if he had another gun and ran my hand over his pockets. His snarl at my touch was like a wild beast's.

"Then you may need this one," I said as I pushed him out into the night.

And, as I closed the door upon him, I flung his revolver after him. The act was, I think, based upon sound strategic principles. It would be very easy for him to get another gun but very difficult to forget my carelessness as to whether he had one.

But, the moment the key was turned in the lock, I whirled and darted across the room. The inner door of the room opened into a hall that ran the length of the house. I passed through that door and was about to cross the hall into the parlor opposite when another sound decided me. I ran down the hall and through the first door to the left into the library, which adjoined the parlor to the rear. After fumbling for a moment for the electric light switch, I finally found it.

I'd been prepared for strange things when I came to Cragcastle. Indeed, the remoteness and solitude of its setting, surrounded by miles of black rock and chaparral-covered mountainside, save to the east, where the water eternally beat and lapped against its foundations, gave the house an appearance of being fashioned for mystery and framed in it. And my interview with Hardridge had been sufficiently remarkable to have prepared me for almost anything. Nevertheless, I admit my credulity was staggered then.

A woman's figure flashed through the doorway that led back into the parlor. The door slammed shut behind her.

It was in no gentle mood that I pursued her. Remember, to me she was at best a housebreaker, and I suppose my nerves were somewhat tense and jumpy, too. She got into the hall before I caught her arm in a grip that must have hurt, and I'm afraid it was with scant courtesy that I drew her back into the parlor.

But, once there and the lights turned on, I like to remember I released her quickly.

"I beg your pardon, miss," I said.

II

IT'S been a saving principle of mine to apply as little thought as possible to feminine beauty. This from, I hope, no innate lack of appreciation in me—but I'll omit self-analysis and simply say that it was something more than beauty that made me instinctively apologize to the intruder. Character was stamped on her sensitive yet sanely strong and sensible face. Whatever the reason for her presence in Cragcastle, it could not be a guilty one, and suddenly I felt guilty under the blazing wrath of her clear blue eyes. As for the unveiled contempt in them, it was as hard to endure as it was, for a moment, to understand.

But, when she spoke, I understood it—at least in part.

"Well, Cousin John," with icy bitterness, "what are you going to do?"

She, too, like Hardridge, had immediately accepted me in my assumed character of John Maxon. That was quite natural, for who else would be occupying Cragcastle? But to be addressed by her as "Cousin" was somewhat different. The late John Maxon, Jr., had, according to Osborne, no near relatives at all. That had been one of Osborne's best arguments why I might, in safety and with no great moral guilt, take his place. If it had been a lie, Osborne must have known I would very shortly discover it. I suppose my stare at the girl must have been quite idiotic.

"Have you come back witless as well as everything else?" she asked sharply. "Can't you speak?"

I could see that under the surface she was really frightened. She was trying the old device of simulating—and perhaps stimulating—courage by hard words.

"I'm naturally astonished," I said. "What are you doing here?"

"Merely paying a cousinly call, of course." She laughed mirthlessly.

"I think you'd better answer me," I told her quietly. "This is my house; it's nearly midnight; you've evidently gained entrance by stealth. In other words, you're in the position of a common burglar. The fact that you're my cousin will not prevent me from turning you over to the police."

"I suppose not. The tarred stick would blacken the whole branch. The family name——"

"You should have thought of that before breaking into my house." It was a rare part, for me, playing the stern landlord.

"I'm not begging," she replied tartly. "Do what you will. Of course, you know what I'm doing here. There's only one thing worth coming for—and that by rights belongs to me, anyway. Or rather, to my father. If your father hadn't stolen it——"

"What do you mean? Don't say that."

"He did, and you know it. It belonged to father. It was willed to him—all he got out of the estate—because he was the eldest son. It's always been so, and grandfather wouldn't break the chain even for your father's lies. Then it disappeared. Who could have taken it except the man who got everything else, who had every opportunity—your father! Why, didn't he tell father he had it—gloat over it—and that it would never be discovered save by his son, you?"

I was getting quite beyond my depth. One thing was clear, however; I was relieved of all obligation toward Lawyer Osborne. By his multiplied falsehoods he had discredited once more the pretty bedraggled saying, "Honor among thieves." Moreover, it seemed likely I might progress faster in solving the riddle if I doffed my mask before this girl—in whose presence, I admit, the wearing of it had become rather odious.

"Why, no," I said. "I must admit all that's a riddle to me. Because, you see, I'm not your cousin."

"Not my—cousin?"

In her bewilderment and increased fear she retreated a step, her hand going up as if to ward me off.

"Merely an imposter," I told her as gently as I could, "but, I assure you, a perfectly harmless one. Your cousin being dead, I planned to take his place—for a day or so, and——"

In the middle of my stumbling half-explanation I observed incredulity come into her face, part of which, I flattered myself, was caused by a new and swift appraisal of me.

"But that's impossible," she interrupted.

"Thank you," I said, "but it's unfortunately true."

"But how— I don't understand! Oh, it isn't possible!"

Neither could I understand why her credulity had passed so swiftly into absolute disbelief. Her only question now seemed to be as to my motive in denying myself.

It was unpleasant. I'm not accustomed to having my word doubted, and I particularly wanted to be believed by this girl. So I told her as convincingly as possible and in as few words the whole story of my presence in Cragcastle.

I'd really been brought into touch with Lawyer Osborne through a want ad., obviously designed to attract every near-respectable world tramp in San Francisco between certain age, weight and height limits. Osborne had quizzed me until he discovered that I had no acquaintances within a thousand miles and that I apparently matched his misuse of the law with a profound contempt for it—which,

incidentally, was his error. Then he'd told me that one of his clients, John Maxon, had just died; that his son and only heir, John Maxon, Jr., had been killed about the same time in a saloon brawl in Hong Kong; that this son had been absent about five years, a ne'er-do-well wanderer, much of the time under assumed names; that in feature and stature I bore a very strong resemblance to him, and that only he, Osborne, knew of this son's death.

Osborne's proposal was, of course, that I substitute for this dead son, which I might do the more easily since a freak provision in old man Maxon's will provided that his son live alone in Cragcastle six months before inheriting. This evidently because he had fled from some danger and his father wished to test his courage and worthiness—but of this Osborne knew nothing. At the end of six months my identity as John Maxon would be easily established—to Osborne's satisfaction, at least—and Osborne and I would split the estate.

WHILE I was telling her this, the girl's expression gradually changed from incredulity to utter amazement, and she apparently had hard work to keep from interrupting me. At the end, after hesitating a moment, she confounded me and upset my whole tale by four astounding words—

"But John isn't dead."

"What!"

The girl's confidence came slowly. But, after all, I had given her mine, and frankness begets frankness. Finally, after apparently considering the matter, she went on:

"No! At least he sailed from China alive. Osborne himself showed me his cable at date of sailing. Then I have a letter he wrote a few days before—a very brief business letter. We weren't friends. His ship reached San Francisco last Saturday."

"Then Osborne lied all around," I said slowly. "After all, I sensed it. But, in the name of reason, why?"

It appeared like a stiff enough problem, but I was more than ever glad I'd come to Cragcastle.

The girl continued to regard me appraisingly, cautiously, but I seemed to have leaped several points in her estimation from legal cousin to illegal imposter—as strong a commentary as I'd yet had on John Maxon's character. Nevertheless, I still considered her apparent lack of fear as largely brave subterfuge, and I tried hard to reassure her. We were both searchers—I for the truth, she for something materially valuable—and, if I could win her confidence, there might be a chance of mutual help.

"I want you to believe," I told her earnestly and truthfully, "that I didn't intend to go through with the thing. Curiosity isn't wholly a feminine vice, Miss Maxon. I knew Osborne was lying, and I wanted to see what was really in his mind. And he never said a word about you. According to him, John Maxon was the only heir. I thought I'd step into the affair without troubling any one, and get out the same way. If I'd really intended to stick, would I have confessed my masquerade to you as quickly as I did?"

I still think that last was a logical argument, and it was to that I returned several times during the five minutes talk that followed. But perhaps the reason Miss Maxon finally permitted herself to believe me was that she wanted to. Perhaps she had all the time held the idea of enlisting me in her own search. But, when I finally brought the talk around to it again, she refused to discuss it.

"No," she said. "It doesn't matter. I shouldn't have come, anyhow. Oh, I must go now."

And she made a hurried move as if to escape into the night.

At that I suddenly remembered that Death watched Cragcastle that night, and, though I stood squarely in her path, I refused to stir.

"Wait!" I said earnestly. "I've something else to tell you. Something for your own safety. Tell me first when and how you came here and how you got into the house?"

"Why, I walked out from the village—Mill Valley, I mean—this morning. I had a bundle of old keys and finally got the front door open. I was here when you came. We had a fine game of hide-and-seek, though you didn't know it. I thought I'd escape discovery till you went to sleep and then leave."

"After searching a little more, I suppose," I supplied. "Well, you came out of your

hiding-place to see if I'd settled down, and— Did you hear voices just before I caught you?"

"Yes."

And then I told her of my interview with Hardridge and tried to make it clear to her that it would be difficult to leave Cragcastle that night without stopping a bullet. I argued the more convincingly because even then, in a nebulous way, the plan I later acted on was forming in my mind.

But, to put it through, I must win Miss Maxon's confidence completely.

My exact arguments don't matter. And, anyway, the personal element figures mainly in matters of this kind. Any one would find it hard to tell me why she should not have stayed in the house. And she admitted, at last, that no one would be concerned about her whereabouts. She was teaching in San Bernardino, had come north during the few days of vacation and was merely registered at one of the San Francisco hotels.

After that she quite readily told me the object of her search in Cragcastle. I'd already divined that it was family jewelry; she centered the search to a single sapphire—a sapphire that had come down in the Maxon family for many generations, always from elder son to elder son, until John Maxon, Sr., had broken the chain. He was the younger of two brothers and the favorite with their father. Indeed, between the other son and their parent had come a wide estrangement—the girl gave me to understand that it was through some machination on the part of John Maxon. Anyway, all the family estate had been willed to John Maxon, except only the famous sapphire—and that had disappeared.

And Miss Maxon was sure her uncle, John Maxon, had stolen it and, being unwilling to dispose of it and unable to display it, had kept it hidden all these years. She said he had even boasted of the theft to her father. And she was sure it was still in Cragcastle, where he had suddenly and unexpectedly died.

Was it? It seemed a fantastic tale but not an incredible one. A great gem and family strife—how related are the two ideas! And I had — considering the proverb, "Like father, like son"—no reason to think over highly of the paternal ancestor of John Maxon, Jr. He might easily be a man who would steal for spite and gloat over his stealings in secret. Of all forms of wealth, jewels lend themselves most easily to this form of vice—as witness history. Truly the love of jewels—but I suppose my belief in Esther Maxon's story was very largely based on my real desire to help her.

"Please don't think that—that it's for myself. But my father's quite ill—has been for years. He's never had—proper care. I don't make enough as a teacher, and, if we could get the sapphire and sell it——"

"I'll get it for you," I said. "Or I think I can."

For her tale of the sapphire had given me the second half of the idea I needed.

"Oh! How?"

"Not by searching. We might search a year and never find it. Your uncle had a good many years to contrive a hiding-place. But, if it's in this house, I think I can get it. I'll try, anyway."

I wasn't too sure. But, if my mental laborings had borne true fruit—if I'd judged accurately the character of the suddenly resurrected John Maxon and his motive in having Osborne inveigle me into impersonating him at Cragcastle—then we had a chance.

For, of course, if John Maxon were alive, he was the principal, Osborne only the agent. I thought it quite clear, too, why he should temporarily desire an understudy in the play called life. In short, I simply took for granted the truth of Hardridge's description of him, thought what such a man would do in such a case as he had found himself on reading his father's will—and in such and such another case—and mapped my moves accordingly.

Without telling her anything of my plan, I finally got Miss Maxon to retire for the night. Indeed, she was very tired. There were bedrooms in the second story of the house, and I led her to one that had strong shutters over the window and confidence-inspiring bolts.

Then I went to the cellar, got twenty feet of light rope and passed through the house again to the front door. Taking my revolver in my hand, I opened the door and darted through it. Hastily I turned the key in the lock. Then I leaped away from the door and across the roadway

into a narrow trail that led through the chaparral down the mountainside. Throughout I made it appear that I was rather clumsily and nervously trying to escape unseen.

Of course, my intention was precisely the opposite.

I assumed that Hardridge would be as easily fooled in such matters as the average city-bred man.

III.

IT WAS a quite dark night. A low, thin mist had drifted up from the sea, and through it the light of the stars and of a ghostly half-moon filtered uncertainly. From the beginning of the trail I looked back a scant twenty yards to the house and saw only a bulky gray shadow. Besides that and the near-by chaparral I could see nothing. The light of the string of villages from the foot of Tamalpais to the ferry passage, the intermittent flash of Alcatraz and even the white radiance that San Francisco usually flings against the sky were all blotted out by the mist.

So, although I knew that humanity, society and the law were all very close at hand, it didn't seem so strange that I should be crouching primitively in the edge of the brush, my nerves strung up, straining my senses for a sign of Hardridge.

Which wasn't long coming. The chaparral crackled to my right. A cautious foot planted itself on the roadway—I judged about thirty paces lower down. There were more footsteps; Hardridge came closer. Just when, by craning my neck out of the brush, I could see him outlined shadowily, I made a slight noise with my foot. Instantly a revolver cracked, and the bullet hit the road a little beyond me.

And instantly I had turned and was moving cautiously—yet not so cautiously that Hardridge could not hear my movements—down the trail.

Hardridge, of course, started in pursuit, as I had intended, and—ostensibly hunted, really hunter—I quickened my flight. I made only enough noise so that the sound of my movements would come to Hardridge's ears above the noise of his own. Which was really considerable. Hardridge's pursuit, at once freighted by excess of caution and hurried by hate, was so laughably awkward that I knew—barring accidents—I'd be able to accomplish at least the first item of my plan.

The trail here descended sharply. On both sides the shrubbery was as thick as an abandoned vineyard. Here and there low chaparral thrust arresting, thorn-tipped branches across the trail and tore at my flesh and clothing. Underfoot the ground was uneven, uncertain, strewn with small stones that were easily dislodged and with dead leaves that crackled. Still I was able in some way to control the sound of my passage and to move with less and less of noise every minute.

Hardridge was now about twenty yards behind me, but he was rapidly lessening the distance. Also, he was rapidly lessening his caution. Probably the diminishing sound of my flight excited him with the thought that I was escaping. Now and then I purposely broke a twig or brushed a branch so he'd know I was still in motion. Once, straightening up, I thrust my head above the chaparral. He fired, but I had ducked out of sight again before his finger jerked the trigger. I intended the movement to enrage him still further, like a mocking gesture.

The game was, I suppose, slightly unfair, for Hardridge was blinded both by passion and inexperience. But he had brought it on himself. Besides, as things stood now, I was really working toward the end Hardridge himself desired. At least I so believed.

A little farther and my flight ended. The trail led straight on, but to the right a narrow opening between two clumps of shrubbery attracted me. I stopped opposite that opening, drew up my feet and backed into it. Then I picked up a pebble and tossed it down the trail. It struck the ground perhaps five yards beyond where I lay and bounced and rolled a little.

Hardridge probably believed, as I intended he should, that the pebble had been dislodged by my foot. Anyway, he came blindly on until I could have reached out and touched him. There he stopped as if he had sensed my nearness and was mentally feeling for me. If it hadn't been for his labored breathing, he might have heard me stir and set myself for the leap.

As it was, the butt of my revolver crashed against his forehead while he still stood

there—waiting, it seemed, for the blow. He reeled backward, and I caught him and twisted his arms behind his back. He was only partially stunned, and he struggled feebly while I tied his wrists together.

"Maxon! —— you, Maxon!" he muttered. And, as full strength and consciousness came to him with complete realization of his helplessness, the strength of his expletives kept pace with his growing rage. Nevertheless, I could hardly disagree with most of his expletives as applied to the individual whose life I'd borrowed; so, while I finished binding his arms securely to his body, I let him talk on. Then—

"Why don't I kill you, then, if I'm all that?" I asked.

It was my intention to give him a doubt to start on. If I'd flatly denied being John Maxon, Hardridge would hardly have believed me; besides, it wasn't in the game. But it was in the game that he be made to regard that possibility—as a possibility.

"Why didn't I kill you a few hours ago or a few minutes or any time between? I could've, you know. As easily as I could kill you now. Of course, you realize that. You're really as helpless out here as an infant."

"Cut that, you——"

It is unpleasant to see a man fairly sob with rage. I suppose part of that rage was at himself for being so easily trapped and mastered.

"I'm going to gag you," I went on when he'd quite finished, "take you back to the house and lock you in a closet. There you'll stay all day. You'll be regularly fed; I want you to keep up your strength. In fact, I've a particular reason for wanting it. In the evening you'll be unbound and the gag removed, but you'll be still kept in the closet—and be sure the door of it will be covered by my gun. You should know by this time that I don't make mistakes. Now, why do you suppose I'm doing all that?"

"How the devil should I know? I suppose you're calling in your friends, the police."

"Try again," I said. "I needn't go to all that trouble to get the police. But I'm merely suggesting that maybe you haven't quite plumbed this thing yet. Put your think-tank to work and try to figure things out. You'll have lots of time in that closet."

He emitted a sound between a curse and a groan. I think he was looking forward into those black hours when he'd be alone with his hatred, balked, bound and helpless.

"You'd better kill me now, John Maxon," he said.

"John Maxon probably would," I replied.

And then I clapped on the gag, giving him that besides a new thought to chew on. It was perhaps the impact of that new thought on his brain that made him quite easy to manage on the way back to Crag-castle.

I put him into the hall closet, which was built into the wall between the doors of the dining-room and reception-room. It was small enough that he would have practically no liberty of movement even if he got free from the rope; the door was strong, and I could figure no chance of his escape. Nevertheless, I placed a barricade of furniture against the wall. Then I went to the telephone.

The wires of which—think of it!—Hardridge had omitted to cut. I've often wondered, of dunderwittedness and crime, which is the cause and which the effect. Hardridge had been, as I was to learn next day, among the higher-ups of crimedom, but even he neglected so obvious a thing as the cutting of a telephone wire.

OF COURSE, I'd provided myself with Osborne's home as well as office address, and, by employing the ancient but usually effective catch phrase, "Matter of life or death," I finally got a sleepy somebody to promise to call him. I admit that, aside from the fact that the hour was a suitable one for the message I had for him, there was something satisfying in the idea of dragging the comfort-loving lawyer from his bed at two in the morning.

"Hello! Hello! Yes, this is Osborne. What is it?"

I hardly recognized the voice whose suave tones had drawn me into this adventure. Irritable as it was, there was clearly a touch of nervous dread in it, too. That nervous dread, the jerky, frightened notes of my own voice were by no means intended to allay.

"This is Part— No, no, I mean it's Maxon. That's it, John Maxon. Are you alone?"

It was interesting to notice how the alchemy of imagination and an evil conscience transmuted my make-believe agitation into real panic at the other end of the wire. Osborne's voice, when it came again, fairly shook.

"Yes. Practically, that is. I don't think— Wait a minute." I think he closed a door. "Now. But be careful over the 'phone. What has happened?"

"Nothing! That is— Well, I'm leaving, that's all. I can't go through with it. That's all. Good——"

"Here, wait a minute," Osborne cried in alarm. "Don't hang up. Wait a minute. Where are you?"

"In Cragcastle, where you sent me," I said nervously and half angrily.

"Well— Has anything— What's happened?"

"Nothing. I told you—nothing."

"But something has. It must've, or you wouldn't— You're right to be careful, but I must know. For your sake—protection, as well as— Listen! I'll ask questions. I warned you of danger, you remember."

"Yes."

"Well, did it materialize?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" Osborne's voice dropped a key. "Is it—ended?"

He pronounced the last word so significantly that there was no mistaking the meaning. It was the lawyer's safe way of asking, over the wire, if Hardridge was dead.

"Yes," I replied.

And thought I heard, over the twenty miles that separated us, a quick, sharp breath of relief.

"And—and I'm going," I continued. "It'll be—discovered. I had to——"

"All right," he interrupted me sharply. "Take care. I quite understand. You had to— But I suppose you're quite right—to go away. We'll have to give up the other project."

I thought he was almost too quick, for realism, to put aside the hope we were both supposed to have of dividing the Maxon estate. But, of course, I was also supposed to be quite unsuspicious that our contract in regard to that estate was a farce and that my function from the beginning had been to kill or be killed by Hardridge.

"I'm glad you agree. Well, good-by!"

"Wait a minute. Tell me. Was it only one? Was he alone?"

"Yes."

"Have you any money?"

I was waiting for that question. I knew he'd ask it, because both he and his principal would certainly desire that I travel far and speedily, and I'd led him to believe I was penniless.

I laughed in a self-satisfied a fashion as I could manage and threw a touch of impudent boasting into my tone.

"Plenty of it."

"Good," said Osborne somewhat perplexedly. "I'm glad of that. But I'd like to know— Can't you tell me——"

"I'm off," I warned.

"Where it is?" he finished desperately. "It'll have to be disposed of, you know. Where'll I—whoever goes over—find it?"

It was clear, of course, that he spoke of Hardridge's body—another inquiry that it was quite inevitable he should make.

"You might look," I said with a sort of boastful gibe, "near the place old man Maxon hid his sapphire."

"What's that? What do you know about—" The lawyer's voice mounted excitedly.

"Good-by."

I hung up the receiver.

A moment later the 'phone began ringing furiously as if Osborne had managed to communicate to the inanimate instrument something of his own agitation. Then I cut the wire—as Hardridge should have done.

And I pulled a couch out of the parlor, placed it near the door behind which Hardridge was imprisoned, lay down on it and was soon asleep. Morning was only a few hours off, and I was quite confident nothing would happen till then. Or, indeed, till the covering darkness of the following night. That is, if I divined correctly the nature of the man for whom I waited.

Which was, of course, not Osborne. Osborne was strictly an office worker. He might be imagined playing any sort of crooked game in the world—but through intermediaries only. His own physical participation and his own personal peril would always be missing elements. No; the man who would come to see to the safety of the Maxon sapphire would be the man who thought it his property—the

man who, using Osborne as agent, had attempted to befool me to his own place under the Damoclean sword.

IV

LOOKING back, I've always felt the day that followed was one of the most remarkable of my life—and I speak of the day, not of the night with its element of tragedy. The day was remarkable for its very lack of that element—for its very unremarkableness. I hold that, with such a night as had passed fresh in our memories, with Hardridge imprisoned, with the arrival of the man whom Hardridge had vowed to kill presumably impending and with the girl's fortune and possibly more than one life depending upon the denouement, it was no commonplace thing that the day slipped by, to Miss Maxon and me, much like a pleasant holiday outing.

For I finally persuaded her to stay until the working out of my plan. Concerning which, by the way, I told her as little as possible. It's always much easier to agree on an end than on the means, and it doesn't always pay to tell everything even to the people in whose interest one may be working.

We talked about a great many things, mainly impersonal, and even took several short walks. One of those walks took us to the place that was then called Land's End. It was Miss Maxon who suggested it; I knew nothing until then of the trap-like cañon at the rear of the house, with its wide mouth and narrow exit upon the sea. But we had no sooner arrived at the railing that guarded that exit, where we could look down some hundred feet into white surf, than Miss Maxon was seized with a violent fit of trembling and suggested that we return. It was the only sign of real agitation I saw in her that day.

That was late in the afternoon and the last time we left the house.

Breakfast and lunch had been largely makeshifts, but dinner that evening was a triumph, Osborne having supplied the house for my residence fairly well and Miss Maxon proving herself a miraculous cook. After we'd eaten, I took his share of the meal in to Hardridge, whom I found in a state of eager expectancy. He evidently remembered my promise that he'd be unbound at nightfall, and I didn't disappoint him. Instead of standing over him with drawn revolver while he ate, as I'd done before, I simply released his hands and left him fumbling wildly but with stiff and awkward fingers at his gag. I wanted to get away from him before he could ask me in words the eager question that had been staring out of his overbright eyes all day.

"Now, don't be a fool," I told him through the closing door. "You can't get out, and you don't want to get out, and you don't want to make a noise. Be quiet, and you'll be —— glad of it later."

And I bolted the door without locking it and then pressed a button that projected from the wall near the door jamb. I heard a pleased exclamation from Hardridge as the electric light came on within his cell. Thereafter he was silent, but, whether because of my advice or because Miss Maxon and I remained so close to the closet that he could hear our occasional movements, I do not know.

For by then it was quite dark, and, after another little preparation for what was to come, I joined Miss Maxon in the dining-room. The partition between this room and the reception-room split the inner wall of the closet, and the house was so quiet that we could sometimes hear Hardridge breathe. We had turned on no lights save that within the closet; so from without the place no doubt appeared absolutely deserted.

Everything was silent and dark. In the two hours that we sat there, I found time to go over several times every incident connected with my peculiar visit to Cragcastle. My interest—desultory at first but rapidly quickening—in the *Chronicle* want ad.; my carefully worded letter in answer and Osborne's skilfully alluring and yet noncommittal reply; our meeting—I suppose I was one of some hundreds of applicants, most of whom were disposed of by the office boy; Osborne's quick inspection, his clever cross-examination, his devious approach to the subject of the missing heir. Our agreement, and my arrival in masquerade at Cragcastle. My interview with Hardridge, not wholly unexpected, yet a very curious one, filled with much that needed explanation. My startling discovery of the presence of the girl, and her still more startling revelations. The conception and partial working out of my plan, the

success of which hung on the next few hours.

Throughout, I reflected, I had been fortunate; things had worked out very much as I had planned and expected. My first motive in the affair had been almost completely satisfied; only one question remained unanswered—that of the cause of Hardridge's hatred of John Maxon. There remained my awakened desire to serve Miss Maxon, and in that I hoped that Fate—it is my egotistic conceit to sometimes regard myself as Fate's co-conspirator—would help me.

As for Miss Maxon, she would have been either more or less than the very natural woman she was had she not felt fear in those hours. Indeed, she had no tangible reason for placing confidence in me—rather the reverse. It was largely because of that fact that I had urged her to stay in Cragcastle. Sometimes I thought it was partly because of that fact that she had stayed. Perhaps she wanted to be on hand at the finding of the sapphire—if it were found. Well, my wish corresponded. If it were not found, I wanted her to know it and be sure of it.

I had, in fact, a remarkably strong desire to stand well in the estimation of Miss Maxon. And I was meditating upon this and also upon the problems connected with the Ko Lao Hui when we both heard quick, nervous steps coming up the gravel path in front of the house. I whispered a wholly unnecessary warning to Miss Maxon to keep quiet. Neither of us made a sound, but both were on our feet when the key of the newcomer grated in the lock of the front door.

WHEN—after the front door had opened and closed again—the hall lights were switched on by some one who seemed perfectly familiar with their surroundings, I was standing just within the dining-room door, with Miss Maxon perhaps a pace behind me. As the man for whom we had waited started down the hall, I heard the slightest stirring in the closet, which indicated that Hardridge was also alert.

The visitor, however, passed the door of the closet without pausing and came on unhesitatingly down the hall. The parlor and the reception-room he had already passed; there remained but two possible objectives, the library and the room wherein Miss Maxon and I watched. That he should turn into the latter had been a chance I had been compelled to take; if he did, the adventure would be apt to end speedily and crudely. But great jewels, I had reasoned, are not often concealed in dining-rooms.

Yet, as the girl and I held our breaths, he passed our door, too, without a glance at the obscurity beyond it.

Though he could hardly have seen us had he looked our way, he was fully revealed by the hall light. The one look I had of him was hardly reassuring for the success of the game I had in mind. If we had ever looked alike, then I owed it to my self-respect to believe that Maxon had changed greatly. But, indeed, I suppose he had, for life stamps every face with life's own mark, and Maxon's face had become a danger signal of vice and cowardice. Now I was very glad I hadn't worn my borrowed identity long.

There was now only one door into which Maxon could turn, and he entered the library across the hall without hesitation, like one sure of his objective. I felt a touch on my arm and looked around into Miss Maxon's eyes, very close. They seemed to flash me at once a warning and question, and I shook my head reassuringly. There was no chance of Maxon's passing out except by the front door. To a man of his temperament nothing could be less attractive than the gloom and desolation of the black rocks that flanked the rear exit.

The sound of Maxon's movements had ceased. He had only been feeling for the switch, for now, peering obliquely down the hall, I saw the library lights flash on. It seemed that he crossed the room; there was another moment of silence and then a sort of rending, scraping sound.

Which sound was, we afterward learned, the spring-impelled opening of a small door in the library wall and the tearing of the wall-paper that had been put on over it. Behind which door was a small vault, of which I suppose only John Maxon, Sr., had the knowledge and the key until he had passed it on to his son.

Maxon had the sapphire—I knew so much from his low exclamation of relief. Hardridge must have heard it, too, for he stirred uneasily in his prison room. Miss

Maxon's breathing quickened, while I—Well, I held in my hand almost literally the key to the unexpected, and my egotism was pleasantly stirred.

Maxon came out of the library, now with a quickened movement and on tiptoe. He passed our door, bent over, fleeing. We heard something. Was it a bolt that had been drawn? John Maxon stopped short.

A door was flung violently open. It was the door behind which Hardridge, up to a scanty thirty seconds before, had been confined. And instantly I stepped out into the hall behind Maxon. In fact, I stepped out and Hardridge burst out at the same minute. The effect was that we faced each other in the well-lighted hall with Maxon midway between us.

Hardridge looked—well, to exaggerate but slightly, like a devil's nightmare come alive, crouching for the spring. For, of course, he instantly thought of me, whom he'd got into the habit of trying to kill. But he saw Maxon in the hall instead and then me over Maxon's shoulder, and bewilderment flashed into his face and matched his rage. The doubt I'd tried to suggest to him, suddenly reinforced, checked his rush.

I had intended, when I'd shaped matters so far, to put that doubt fairly in the form of a question, but John Maxon himself made it unnecessary, had answered that question before it was asked in a gesture of self-betrayal. He staggered back—threw up his hands.

"Hardridge!" he croaked.

Something in his right hand left a streak of light behind it, like a shooting star.

And Hardridge, arriving at the truth too quickly for memory or logic, recognizing his enemy by a species of instinct, would have leaped in dreadful silence at Maxon's throat. But I jerked my revolver up and covered them both.

"One minute," I said. "Well, Maxon. Yes, I'm the man. I'm the man your tool, Osborne, picked to take your place here. Keep back, Hardridge. No, there'll be no killing here—not till I find out what it's all about, anyway.

"Speak up, Hardridge," I ordered, turning from Maxon's twitching features to Hardridge's inflamed and deadly face. "What have you against this man?"

"That, —— him!" exploded Hardridge. "That traitor and thief! He stole the money that would have saved me from prison—me and the rest of us. That coward and cur! Why, blast you," this directly to Maxon, "you knew that without that money we were lost. The—reformers——"

"He has a license to talk, he has," quavered Maxon, standing sidewise in the hall, alternately glancing apprehensively at Hardridge and beseechingly at me.

Unhappy, indeed, was his situation, his only hope of life being in me, whom he'd planned to dupe to the same death that now threatened him.

"Who was he?" I asked Maxon. "Come to the point, quick."

"He! He was a dirty gambling-house keeper and dive-keeper and worse. King of crookdom through his pull in the City Hall. And the money he says I stole was a slush fund to keep the politician crooks in office. Because the other side won and he went to San Quentin where he belonged, he blamed me——"

"You whining sneak," cried Hardridge, "you were thick enough with us while the going was good."

"That'll do, the pair of you," I said. "I quite understand."

I did, well enough. Details were missing, but they were unessential. These two were part of the ring that had in the old days debauched the city government of San Francisco. To me that crime constitutes one of the baser forms of treason, and I admit my finger twitched to shoot them both.

Then I thought of the sapphire. I'd formed no definite plan as to acquiring it once John Maxon had taken it out of its hiding-place. Circumstances must guide me, and—here were the circumstances.

I SUPPOSE in a way I was responsible for what followed. I suppose that my apparent indecision encouraged Hardridge, and I may even have stepped a little to one side. But I know I didn't plan the thing or even foresee it. I did have a peculiar flashing vision of that dark cañon at the rear of the house, that dark cañon with its smooth, steep, narrowing sides and its floor dipping ever more rapidly toward the jumping-off place at the end.

Anyway, all of a sudden Hardridge

started for Maxon. Maxon did the natural thing for him; he whirled and ran. I could hardly have stopped him if I had tried. He brushed me back against Miss Maxon and half-way through the dining-room door, and Hardridge tore after him without a word.

There was a chair near the end of the wall, and Maxon had sanity enough left to push it before him through the window. He followed the chair head first, and Hardridge plunged through the opening after him.

I was delayed a little in unlocking the door. I stepped out into a fantastic hollow of ragged rocks, flooded here at the ravine's beginning with moonlight. There was a narrow pass to the right, but Maxon had missed that pass. And he and Hardridge were leaping like shadows straight down toward Land's End.

Maxon seemed to be straining to stop. Perhaps he saw the railing and memory came to him of what was beyond it. But his pace was so great and the grade was so steep that he could not check himself all at once, and he brought up against the railing with such force that it creaked and sagged outward under the impact. But it still held.

And Hardridge clutched him. But, by the time I got close enough to see clearly, Maxon had seized Hardridge's wrists and was prying them outward and slowly loosing Hardridge's grip on his throat. He wrenched Hardridge's hands away, and Hardridge gripped him around the body.

But Maxon gripped him likewise and began to bend Hardridge's body backward.

"Oh, they'll be killed. Can't you—Oh!"

Miss Maxon had come up, frightened, sobbing. She would have run up to them and thus put herself in danger, but I held her back.

"My dear Miss Maxon! My dear Miss Maxon!"

There was nothing else I could say.

I turned and saw how very like an open door was the end of the cañon. Beyond that door the sky sparkled with stars, and the waters beneath the stars reflected their light. But the water at the base of the cliff must have been too unquiet to reflect it. I could hear it roaring as it surged over the rocks, and I imagined it stretching up white and hungry fingers.

"Can't you stop them!" cried Miss Maxon.

One more look I took at the place where the two men had struggled. Then I stepped between Miss Maxon and that place and urged her gently back toward Cragcastle. For Hardridge, knowing himself overmastered, had suddenly yielded and somehow dragged Maxon with him under the railing. Maxon gripped the edge of the rock, but Hardridge tore his grip relentlessly away. And so there came an end to the bad beginning made many years before.

I reflected, as I picked a way up the uneven cañon bottom, that the quivering woman whom I led would probably some day be mistress of Cragcastle, since her father was now heir to the Maxon fortune. In that case they could well afford the loss of the sapphire.

WE PARTED at the base of the mountain, Miss Maxon and I. It was not late, and we could go different ways quite unnoticed into Mill Valley and thence to San Francisco. If the thing that had happened at Cragcastle were ever discovered, there was no possibility that she'd be connected with it, even in thought. While as for me. . . .

"I'm sorry you're going back to China," she said.

Of course she would be, for I'd told her absolutely nothing of my errand there, unraveling the mystery of the Ko Lao Hui leadership. If she had known what was ahead of me, she would have been glad my eagerness to be at it was to be gratified.

"You have been—well, fine," she said.

I murmured a few deprecating phrases.

"And—wonderful. I've been trying to guess—how much of it all you had planned out ahead. The escape of Hardridge, for instance."

"Well?" I questioned noncommittedly.

"You pretended it was accidental. But I found the string with which you pulled back the bolt of the closet door. That was no accident."

"Maybe not," I replied.

Frankly, it pleased me a little that she had discovered it.

"And then you knew—that father would inherit——"

"Miss Maxon," I said, "there's no

pursuit so interesting as the pursuit of motives, and none as profitless."

She laughed a little.

"To think," she remarked, "that, when I think of you—as I shall quite often—I'll always have to call you to myself just 'that man.'"

I suppose it had seemed to her a curious omission; however, names are so far accidents that they seem to count for but little in the scheme of things. And I've rather lost the habit of giving my true name to every one I meet in passing through this world as if I were some article of merchandise that needed to be perpetually tagged, ticketed and labeled. But there is no reason why I should not give it.

"My name is Partridge, John Partridge," I said as I released her hand.

Touching the Perils

A Complete Novelette

BY S. B. H. HURST

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS, master of the tramp *Psyche*, leaned upon the rail of his steamer's bridge, looking at a mellow "lovers' moon" and swearing with melancholy ardor, while his chief officer, from the other side of the bridge, regarded him with a sort of disciplined disgust.

Surely it was bad enough to sail on an old biscuit-box like the *Psyche*, without having a skipper who allowed his private troubles to influence him more than he did the weather. And always after supper, in the chief's watch, when a man was having enough to do to digest the miscalled food that their miserly owner, Silas Rutherford, picked up in some gutter, did the old man come up on the bridge and make things worse. The chief officer snorted loudly.

As if it were an answer to the interpretation of that snort, the captain growled, "You can go and take a smoke, if you want, mister," in such a way that any generosity the permission might have contained was wrung out of it like water from a swab. If he had said, "Get to the devil out of here, and leave me to my troubles," the chief officer would have gone below with the same "Thank you, sir," and told the same lurid tale to the second engineer in the starboard alleyway—a tale which even a Boccacio would find it necessary to censor.

But Williams would not have cared very much if he had overheard. As a meed of self-respect, he might have thrashed his chief officer, but his anger would have been but superficial. For a far deeper wound was stinging him, and the *Psyche's* nearness to her home port, Newcastle-on-Tyne, was sending up the temperature of the sore.

He began to stump up and down the bridge, indifferent to a perfect Summer's evening. Tomorrow night and the *Psyche* would be in dock. Then would come the usual two weeks of torturing desire, of his praying to the girl to marry him and of her answer, so galling to his pride.

More money. Always more money. Other men made more; why couldn't he?

And to his answer, that Silas Rutherford would not raise his salary and always managed to cheat him out of his bonus, would come the irritating question—

"Why don't you get another ship?"

As if ships were so easy to get. He thought he had done very well to get command at twenty-seven, but the girl was as blind to his merits as Silas was to his need of more salary. And yet she kept him hanging on, pretending to love him. Not that the captain realized the pretense. Being his ideal, his divinity, she was beyond such a thing. And he loved her and wanted her. Had the opportunity offered, he felt that he would turn pirate to win her. Then he cursed himself for not being his own boss, for being dependent upon the money of Silas Rutherford and his kind.

So, taking it altogether, he was an unpleasant commander, and, when he went to his room shortly after eight bells, the third mate, who had come on duty, breathed more relievedly.

While the *Psyche* was pounding her way to port, her owner was reading a document that had to do with her insurance. As a matter of fact, old Silas Rutherford could recite the wording of that policy, but it assisted his complex and criminal cogitations to read and reread it while he planned. The old phrase, handed down from generation to generation of marine underwriters, brought to him visions of delightful possibilities. "Now, touching upon the perils —such as—" They were all there, from "The act of God and the king's enemies" to all the chances of sea-disaster, and Silas loved to dwell on them, hoping his ships would fall foul of one or all of them, for he greatly disliked paying premiums.

This was before the Great Killing put the breath of life into old hulks, when freights were so low that dead ships paid better than live ones; when, because of this latter fact, insurance policies were sometimes converted into cash by the unmoral. And Silas owned eight vessels that just scraped into the A 1 classification by the skin of their paint.

Not that he could be accused of lack of effort in regard to striving for profit, even when freights denied it—and Captain Williams and the other captains and officers in the ships of Silas were not the only people aware of his scraping. His name was a byword, and his stinginess something to refer to as the acme of human meanness. But Silas cared nothing about that.

Indeed, he probably enjoyed his reputation and went on serving out paint with the care of a chemist serving attar of roses, while seeing to it that his crews, tired of fighting for life against the board of trade allowance—weighed out to them by partisan scales and dredged from the dusty corners of condemned ship-chandlers' stores, deserted at the first port—with wages, of course, unpaid. And Captain Williams and the other captains and officers, as already mentioned, slaved on low salaries for a bonus which always mysteriously eluded them.

But even such careful business methods failed to produce a dividend. Which caused Silas to take his insurance policies out of the safe to yearn over them.

And the one he fondled most was the policy that covered the ancient *Psyche*. He had paid many premiums on that promising piece of paper, all of them clear gain to the insurance company, and by exactly the amount of that premium had the *Psyche* been a dead loss to him for more than a year. Surely the coincidence was meant as a hint. A deacon of his church for more than forty years. . . .

He sat in his lonely, dingy office, the warm breeze of the Summer evening bringing through the window the noise of rattling winches on ships loading and discharging in the near-by docks. He usually sat there until bedtime, because he had no friends and because to spend money on amusement was an impossible vice to a man who would rather have the money than the amusement. And he wasn't worth more than a million pounds, exclusive of his exasperating investment in ships.

So for many evenings had he deliberated over an untimely end for the *Psyche*. Neither did the idea leave him altogether during the day. But the one large obstacle in the scheme was the need of an accomplice. He would have to find a man willing to undertake the sinking or burning of the ship, and that man would have to be well-paid. Of course, the captain was the best man for the job. But, then, the captain would not only have more at stake than an ordinary man, but he would also be more expensive.

He would be risking his certificate in

addition to taking the chance of going to prison, and he would know the value of the insurance policy. Yet Silas clung to the notion of getting the captain to help him. If he could only "get around" Williams in some way. There must be a way, for every man has his weak side, or else there is something he wants so badly that he will do anything to get it.

SO HE reasoned. Yet, when the weakness of Captain Williams came into the office next morning, Silas nearly missed his opportunity.

She came early, her good looks and pretended embarrassment signaling for help—which three clerks immediately attempted to give her. But Silas prevented them. That is, he happened to come into the office at that moment, and the clerks scurried back to their desks as he brushed past the girl on the way to his room—leaving her standing in the middle of the floor, appealing to the universe with a studied pose. The clerks peered over their desks at her, remarkably like three scared mice peering out of their holes at a tempting piece of cheese which the proximity of the cat prevented them from appropriating, until with a shrug she turned and walked boldly into the private office, astonishing Silas by asking sweetly when the *Psyche* would be in port.

"How did you get in here?" he barked.

The girl pouted and indicated the door with a gesture.

"Well, what do you want?"

"When will the *Psyche* come in?"

"What do you want to know for?"

"Because—because Captain Williams is—is a friend of mine."

A remarkable change came over Silas. He became almost polite, closing the door and dragging a chair to the desk for the lady.

"Sit down, won't you? So you're a friend of the captain's, eh. Very lucky man!" And he giggled in the senile way of men unaccustomed to women.

"Yes—we—we—you see——"

She blushed with the acquired art of long practise.

"I do see—you are going to marry him, eh?"

"Perhaps," she stiffened slightly.

"Ump."

Silas was thinking hard, but the girl, believing him at the limit of his conversational powers, decided, for reasons of her own, to help him.

"It's the way I've been brought up," she hinted. She had been "brought up" in the unpleasant environment of a cheap saloon—a "tied house," owned by a brewery—of which her father had been the ostensible proprietor. "I've had so many good offers that the wages of a ship-captain look kind of small. But, oh my, what am I saying—you must think I'm oreful, talking to a stranger this way."

"Not at all, my dear." Silas found himself thinking he needed a new suit.

"So," she further elucidated, "I am making him wait till he gets better off."

Greater luck can no man have than that a woman will bare her fool soul to him, but the somewhat fascinated Silas missed the revelation, seeing only a pretty girl whose power over the captain of the *Psyche* could be used advantageously.

"You won't tell him I was here," she rattled on. "He's so jealous, you know."

She wondered what it would be like to be married to a man worth a million pounds, even if he were old.

"No, I won't tell him you were here."

Silas held her unresisting hand. He had never known a woman like her, which was perhaps unfortunate, because there was no memory she could revive to bring back the taste of rotten fruit—which most men have lipped and remember only with feelings of the deepest shame. He was sorry when she left, and she had shown him that Williams could be handled. Later on he recollected that he had not answered her question about the docking of the *Psyche*. She was too good for Williams, anyhow!

But the captain was an honest man, and Silas was nervous about broaching the subject. He waited until the *Psyche* had been in port two days. Then, in the middle of business details, he suddenly remarked—

"Hear you're going to get married?"

The captain flushed but said nothing.

"Girl want to wait till there's more money in the bank?" suggested Silas crudely.

"Something like that," admitted Williams gruffly, his face showing how the woman had fascinated him, how he craved her.

"Well—" Silas seemed to sneer—"if I

wanted a girl and was a big, strong, young fellow like you, I'd do more than sit around—I'd rob a bank before I'd let her get away from me."

"That would only get me in jail," retorted Williams.

Silas laughed to hide his nervousness—

"Would you do it if you knew you wouldn't get caught?"

"I'd do anything," growled the captain. "But what's the good of talking about it?"

"Well," Silas hesitated, then took the plunge, "well, I can show you a way to make money."

Williams was first astonished; then he was effusively grateful—

"If you do that, Mr. Rutherford, I'll give my life for you any time."

"Don't want you to do that." Silas got up, walked to the door, opened it suddenly, saw that no one was listening and went back to his desk. "Don't want you to do that," he cackled at the surprized captain.

He stopped talking—it was a difficult job, this, even harder than he had expected. He wondered how Williams would face the Board of Trade investigation after the thing was done. Lawyers have a way of making sailors tell more than they want. He had seen 'em.

"The fact is," he managed after a few minutes, "the fact is, Captain, the *Psyche* has been a dead loss to me for some time."

"I've done my best, sir."

"Yes, yes, I know you have. But all the same, you know, I can not be expected to keep on taking losses. I'm not in business for the fun of it any more than you are. But, while you get your pay every voyage, whether the ship makes a profit or not, I don't."

"You aren't thinking of laying her up, are you, sir?" The captain was naturally distressed at such a possibility.

"May have to," Silas sighed, "unless you can help me out."

"Me, sir? What would you suggest, sir? I can not see where I can cut down expenses anywhere."

Silas appeared to think deeply. Then he went to the safe and brought back the insurance policy.

"I suppose that, like every other captain afloat, you've often thought about the insurance, haven't you?"

"Yes, and with the way things are I've often felt like I'd like to make a profit for you that way, sir," was the astounding answer.

"Do you mean it?" Silas almost shouted.

"Why, no, of course not. I was just joking," replied the somewhat shamefaced Williams. "You know, just as you said, nearly every skipper thinks about the insurance now and then—and wonders."

"Well," Silas spoke very quietly now, "I am not joking—not a bit of it. Things have come to the place where I don't joke about insurance. See here, help me to realize on this, and I'll give you command of my best ship with increase of pay and five hundred pounds as well."

He had said it. He had taken the leap, and now he watched the captain—who for the moment was speechless—with some apprehension.

"What do you mean?" growled the captain. "Want me to turn crook?"

"You know what you just said?"

"Yes, but that was in fun."

"IS IT fun about your wanting to get married, too?" Silas grinned—the captain had given him far less trouble than he had expected. "If you won't sink the *Psyche* for me, I'll get a man who will, fire you and give you no reference. Where would your marriage be then?"

Where would it? The unhappy sailor could easily answer that question. And there was hardly a chance of being found out. Wasn't she worth taking that chance for.

"Suppose I tell the insurance company what you asked me to do?" he spoke desperately.

"I'll have you arrested for criminal libel and send you to prison. You have no witness, you know. But why be foolish? Only you and me will know—and it's my ship, anyway. I'll be hanged if I can understand why you even hesitate—and a fine young lady like that waiting for you, too. And the money all's between you."

Williams said nothing. Every cell in his great body craved the girl, and, when in such a condition, a man's morals are smothered by very primitive emotions. And, as he had said, most sailors look upon insurance from the owners' standpoint.

"Just think," urged Silas, "you're chartered to a Spanish port. Easy cargo to fire. Open the sea-cocks to drown it.

She'll sink in no time. You'll be back in a few weeks, and then—your wedding-day."

But the captain still fought feebly.

"What about my ticket?"

"They won't touch it. How can they? 'Taint your fault if the cargo catches fire. The crew will only be too eager to get clear. You'll probably be a hero for not losing a man. You know just where to start things. And afterward you'll get my best ship, you know. And, yes, I'll let you take your wife to sea with you. Chances are that, if you don't take this offer and get some money, she'll marry some other man. And you know it."

Williams did know it. And he remembered vividly an unpleasant scene of the previous evening when the lady had taunted him about his lack of ability to make money. She wanted a diamond ring, which his scant savings made impossible. And here was five hundred pounds going begging. The job was easy enough. And in six weeks, at the most, he could be married, get a better ship with more pay and take her to sea with him. That last pulled hardest.

"What are the terms?" he asked gruffly, not looking at Silas.

"Fifty pounds down and the balance when the job's done. Your pay increased two pounds a month from today. And, of course, no lay-off when the *Psyche* sinks."

Still the captain hesitated. He loved ships and felt not unlike a prospective murderer. Indeed, this sentiment weighed more on the moral side than did the chance of being found out. But, then, Silas, old scoundrel, would get another man to do it unless he did it. And the girl. . . .

Williams got out of the chair.

"I'll let you know tomorrow," he promised and went to see the lady.

He saw her. What chance had his scruples in her presence, that had been weak enough in the office of Silas Rutherford. For sailors are really myopic about the rights of insurance companies. Then, their last parting still in his mind, he greeted her with—

"How would you like a fifty-pound diamond ring?"

"You darling. How did you do it?"

"I didn't say I'd got it. I just asked you how you'd like one."

She moved away from him:

"You know I want one. Do you think it clever to talk that way. It's bad enough to think of marrying a man too poor to buy a girl what every other engaged girl has, without him making a joke about it. You'd be ashamed if you had any." And a cloudburst settled the matter.

A little later, after he had promised to buy the ring next day, she again asked where he raised the money. He told her of his raise of pay, the best ship, permission to take his wife—did she know who that lady was—and invented a savings-account of long duration to account for the ring. But, if a man must sell his soul, why not for kisses? For has any philosopher yet proven them to be worth less than pieces of silver?

II

SO A few weeks later Captain Williams walked down the rocky, dog-smelly street of a tiny Spanish fishing village, the stars looking at him from a windy sky and his mouth gritty with curses. It was after midnight, and, but for spasmodic barkings and the moan of the flood tide, the place was quiet and sleep-suggesting. But Williams could not sleep. Indeed, he doubted if he would ever sleep again, for his thoughts were a roaring cyclone that would not still. So he had left his bed in the smugglers' retreat of an inn and gone down to the shore.

And everything had looked so bright. Things had gone just as he had planned. The *Psyche* had caught fire in six places and shortly afterward slipped to the bottom of the sea without making much fuss. Ten hours in the boats—Williams had been favored with a nice fair wind—and all hands had been safely landed. Then, the news cabled to Silas, the captain had waited for orders and congratulations while he arranged for the crew to be sent home by the distressed seaman's route.

By rights he should have gone with them, but his conscience had gathered to itself all manner of intangible fears, and he had decided to wait in the village. Then Silas had replied to the cable—by letter, to save money. And with the letter from Silas had come another.

The old man had been abusive. Why had the captain been so careless as to lose a valuable ship and cargo? This was to be

expected, and Williams had grinned at what he imagined to be cunning and, while grinning, did not trouble to finish the letter. Instead, he opened the other, which he was itching to read.

And the other letter had opened his eyes, broken his heart, as he believed, and shown him that Silas had meant what he had written. For Silas had married the girl, who wrote saying she could never marry a man who lost his ship, who would never get another ship, and who hadn't a penny to his name. But she forgot to send the ring. That was all, except that she loved Mr. Rutherford.

There was no word from Silas about the four hundred and fifty pounds he had promised to pay and nothing about the command of his best steamer. No; just the curt letter of abuse and the reminder that Williams would get no reference from him. And the illuminating scrawl from the woman. No wonder Williams could not sleep. But he would get even. Oh, yes, he would show them. But how? To write to the insurance company would be foolish.

Silas would have him arrested for libel—the libel of a disappointed suitor—and the company would arrest him for barratry. And what chance would his word have against that of Silas? Silas, with a million pounds to hire lawyers, and Williams without—the girl had spoken at least one true word—a penny. He even owed the keeper of the cheap inn.

But Williams saw nothing strange about the wedding. The woman's cleverness escaped him. He was so infatuated with her that it never occurred to him that Silas was an old fool who had fallen as he himself had fallen. For Williams still believed that any man would marry her if she were willing, and he thought Silas lucky. To have thought otherwise would have done away with the urge for revenge. That was all that mattered now—to get even.

But when a few nights later the dirty keeper of the inn shut the door in his face about bedtime, shrieking shrill abuse which had to do with the payment of debt, and Williams had no place to go but the beach—the desire for revenge had grown colder. Immediate need had fogged its clarity, and kisses were of less worth than square meals and warm beds. But there were neither beds, meals nor kisses in sight. Yet, its shadow beckoning across the calm, moonlit sea, was a small fishing-boat at anchor and untenanted.

So, shivering slightly, the captain stripped, bundled his clothes on his head and, swimming high, made his way to her. Climbing on board, he dressed, wrapped himself in the sail and after a time slept. No doubt the graybeards of that village will tell for many years the legend about the thief of an Englishman who, not content with robbing the keeper of the inn, stole also a fishing-boat. But, like most legends, the tale will lack truth. For Williams did not steal the boat. On the contrary, the boat stole the captain.

That is, while he slept, it tugged uneasily at its anchor until the grass rope doing duty as a cable parted, and Williams, still sleeping, was carried out to sea on the ebb tide. He awoke with the call to breakfast. But the call was but the echo of other meals, for there wasn't a crust on board. And the land was a mere haze, and no ships were in sight.

The tale of thirst and hunger has been too often told to be here repeated. Besides, there is nothing pleasing about the tale. More pleasing to Williams is the fact that three days later he reached Gibraltar in the dark, was mistaken for a denizen of the place and met a shrewd Rock scorpion who had no ears for tales but who gave him five pounds for the boat, which, of course, was worth much more. But five pounds to the captain was the beginning of fortune. Once more he could eat, sleep and smoke. And revenge still called him, but its voice was not so near.

It was obviously his duty, both to himself and the underwriters, to go back to England for the Board of Trade investigation. Silas had been right when he had said the captain's certificate would not be blackened, but a guilty conscience saw less clearly. As it was, he might find an out-of-the-way owner who would not ask questions—for the ticket and his previous discharges were in his possession.

But Gib. was no place to find such owners, although it was an excellent place to get word of them. The five pounds melted rapidly, and Williams had no desire to see another door shut in his face about bedtime when friendly fish-boats might not beckon so kindly. And, once broke, he

would be harried into some ship's forecastle without chance of holding back. So one sunlit morning he went in search of the Rock scorpion and found him easily.

"Howdy?" the scorpion was affable.

Williams replied in kind and began to collect the memories having to do with scorpions. He had heard about their many underground methods of doing business and their supposed vast wealth. The rumors that they formed a sort of trust, which had a finger in all Gibraltar business, had also come his way. He knew that, while willing to buy a fishing-boat and in league with the many smugglers in the district, it was no uncommon event to see a scorpion bid for a steamer at auction and pay fifty or sixty thousand pounds cash when it was knocked down to him.

But whether the scorpions worked as a league or as individuals was no concern of Williams', because this shabby, somewhat unclean, English-language-mangling mixture of a hundred different breeds was obviously not only his star of hope but also his last resort—excepting, of course, some ship's forecastle, under a new name.

"Like to talk business with you." Williams succeeded in making his voice sound comfortably indifferent, although back in his mind the final episode of the kidnaping fish-boat loomed largely.

"Oh, ha, of course—we go to my horfice."

THEY walked along the warm, dusty, winding road until they arrived at a sort of wine-shop, with the customary sign relating to the purity and antiquity of the goods sold within and the usual heavy population of flies. Near the door a young Spaniard made querulous demand of a starved donkey, emphasizing his wishes with a stick. But the animal continued to study the sign of the wine-shop as if he sought patiently for some degree of truth, and blows could not penetrate to his absorbed mind. They passed inside, where the apparent owner slept comfortably, quite indifferent to his likeness to a fly-paper—waking into a million smiles when the scorpion kicked him.

"This my home and horfice," the scorpion made some unnecessary remark. "Into the back room this son of ten thousand thieves will bring us drink, where we may talk in peace, eh?"

The gentleman of the penitentiary family increased the ratio of his smiling at the reference to his ancestors, produced two not overly clean glasses and a bottle and led the way into the back room—a dingy place, which, however, was gratefully cool after the street.

"What the business you have?"

The preliminaries were over, and the scorpion made inquiry.

Captain Williams hesitated. In the hard, curious eyes of the scorpion he saw the answer to any request for a job, the answer to any asking for assistance—a sneering "nothing for you"—and a sickening feeling of failure was succeeded by a gust of anger at himself for having stooped so low. And then suddenly he felt himself in the unusual position of being, as it were, behind those eyes—of looking at himself through the eyes of another man. And what he saw made him ashamed.

Then he realized that all men who have the courage to sail their own ships—the men who do not depend on "jobs"—must regard him as the scorpion would do the moment he mentioned the "business"—as a sort of weakling, as a failure, as one of the sort that wants things arranged for him, much as a mule needs harnessing before it can work. Yes, he saw himself as one lacking that something which causes a man to struggle toward an ideal, heedless of the mire he must go through—to independence.

And then he asked himself why? Why should he not be his own boss when this wretched Rock scorpion could be? Surely he had as much intelligence. The other was not even a white man—was a mongrel of a hundred mixtures. Yet he had made something of himself. Better a burglar than a beggar. Williams saw himself, almost cringing to this mongrel for a job, doing the rotten bidding of old Silas, a slave to his lust for a woman—even this, in his moment of clarity, did he see. And—for such things do actually happen—in that moment Williams became something.

Just as a chemical solution remains a mere grouping of molecules until the addition of the needed constituent causes precipitation, so had Williams lived in the inchoate condition of the majority of mankind—until this moment in the grimy wine-shop. What really happened he never knew or troubled to know. He felt his

mouth and chin stiffen to the latent power in him that had found its motive, and his eyes, now grimly smiling, fought down very easily those of the scorpion.

Still, there was no business that he knew of, but in his new condition such an admittance was unthinkable. Therefore he fenced. And luck was with his first passage with the swords of business, with his first job as his own boss.

"How many ships do you want?" he asked carelessly, rapidly deciding that, if the scorpion had bought ships once, he might buy them again and, if nothing came of his question, he had saved his face by the pretense of having something for sale. To his astonishment the scorpion seemed startled, most upset. So many words rushed for outlet that they jammed in his throat like a panic-stricken crowd trying to escape from a burning building. And this agitation grew rapidly.

"Who told you? What you mean, eh? Have you just pretend? You come in fish-boat; look like you broke. Not fair, that. Oh, ha, no, not at all fair. I think you all the time were fooling. Yes, I told my wife that. You ask her. She say so, too. Now, what the game, eh?"

Williams laughed and continued to laugh to give himself time to think. Why should the scorpion be so excited? Even supposing that he had some deal on that had to do with the buying of ships—why on earth should the mere mention of it throw him into such a state of mingled fear and anger? Things were so bad all over the world that only an unprecedented buying could send prices up—nothing that the scorpion could be connected with. Yet, what was he afraid of?

"Well," Williams spoke quietly, delighting in the new feeling of power, "I had my reasons for coming to Gib. in that old boat and for selling her to you at far below her proper price. Maybe I hadn't been quite so far out to sea as I looked." He paused, wondering what the owner of the boat had thought, meaning to pay him some day. "But you don't expect me to tell you all that, do you?"

The scorpion rapped loudly on the table, cursed the lazy innkeeper when he appeared, and gave great orders about setting up the very best wine in the house in a hurry. He had a notion that hospitality greases the ways.

"We are friends, no?" he professed.

"If you like to put it that way—I'm not particular," Williams crushed down the weakening memory of what he had been an hour ago.

The wine arrived, and Williams was amused at the ceremonious manner of the scorpion. It reminded him of something. Whom had he seen drink that way?

But the wine did not loosen the tongue of the scorpion, although Williams questioned him quite cleverly. Consequently, the captain was driven to invention. He had a fair knowledge of financial methods, even if most of it had been acquired in the bucket-shops that had prevented his savings from rising to diamond rings. And he understood something of the ways of ship-brokers. That reference to ships seemed to be trumps. At any rate, it was the only card in his hand. He decided to play it.

"Now, look here, Sylvester," he began to lie fluently, "what I have been doing is all my business. I took that boat just as I always take what I happen to want, but what caused me to take her is also my business. Now, the two men who I have had watching you——"

Sylvester jumped out of his chair, his eyes popping. For why had the captain had him watched? Had they not always been the best of friends. If the captain wanted more for the fish-boat, he had only to say so, and the money would be given him at once. He knew they were friends. They had drunk much wine together. He had always loved the captain and had heard of the great deeds of that wonderful man, the captain's father, before him. For why had he been watched as if he were a thief?

With an effort Williams put an end to this unexpected but very satisfactory outburst. It was obvious that Sylvester was interested in ships, queer though it seemed. And he knew the methods of scorpions pretty well. If this one were buying ships—and he appeared to be—he would buy them on options. For, whether he were buying for himself or for some Asiatic who wanted to become an owner—which often happened—or buying on speculation—whatever reason, he would first buy an option on the vessel or vessels he wanted.

This deduction was so simple that to

spring it on Sylvester would surprize him no more than it would surprize a stock-gambler to tell him you knew he was buying on margin. But, if Williams could get the scorpion to believe he knew why he was buying or whom he was buying for—why, in that case, he might do business. Because people who wanted to buy ships in anything but a very small way were at that time rare.

"Of course, I wanted to know about you, and I paid to find out," he growled. "How do you think I made my money—by selling boats? So I made up my mind to see you, because there was money in it. Because, of course, I found out you are trying to tie up a bunch of steamers on options."

AGAIN Sylvester rapidly worked his hands and tongue, but his denial was weak. What would he throw away money like that for—ships not worth anything? Did the captain think him a fool to buy options when ships were not paying the owners enough to buy paint? He went on hastily to explain that he knew this because he sold paint, and he went off at a tangent, gabbling about the paint business until Williams shut him up again, grinning.

He filled one of the glasses to the brim and drank to the staring scorpion.

"Now—" he put down the empty glass, "I know you're after options, but you're not getting them as fast as you want because you have to go awful quiet about it. I, too, have bought options. Now, it doesn't matter who will take them up—you know, and I know. The difference is that you are buying the options directly for the final buyers of the steamers, while I am buying on spec. with my own money. If I didn't know that your people will be glad to take my options off my hands at a profit to me, you don't think I'd have been fool enough to buy them, with times as they are, do you?"

The fascinated Sylvester shook his head in agreement.

"So I know who you're working for, and I know they want a lot of ships. I have between twenty and thirty A1 steamers tied up that I will turn over to your people, and I have another fleet of seven right under my hand." He was thinking of Silas and his unfortunate investment in shipping. "Now, don't ask me questions, because you won't get anything out of me. Tell the chap who is behind you that he can come to my hotel tomorrow morning if he wants to do business at the right price. That's all."

He shot a glance at the scorpion and saw that his surmise had been correct. There was some man behind Sylvester, and that man was in Gibraltar. So far, so good. And he had learned that often the most shrewd men are the most credulous, especially when their suspicions can be aroused.

"When can you deliver?" Sylvester, admitting everything, spoke like one deeply grieved.

"Whenever I want to. Charters and ship can be transferred together, if necessary, but most of them are only chartered from voyage to voyage. Not a one of them is tied up for more than a month. But, of course, I have to give, in most cases, a certain number of days' notice." For a moment Williams was afraid his limited knowledge had caused him to make a slip, but the scorpion appeared quite satisfied; so he went on. "But don't imagine that I tied up forty or fifty thousand pounds for the fun of it. Use your brain, Sylvester. Why did I come to you in that dirty fish-boat?"

That was a clever move, for the scorpion's mind loved the curved route, and the action of his backer depended greatly upon Sylvester's opinion of Williams. The captain did not know it, but the scorpion, seeing profits for himself without much labor, had already decided to tell his man that he had known Williams for thirty years, knew him to be worth at least a hundred and fifty thousand pounds—there are many men of millions not known to Bradstreet—knew his word to be as good as a bond and knew all about his good old English family before him.

Later, when the way looked very smooth, Williams was to realize this character-painting of the scorpion, and now his lucky words helped the selection of the brightest colors. For Sylvester's mind loved the crooked lane, the while he believed it to be straight. The dim, the dark, the mysterious appealed to him when square buying and selling wouldn't rouse him to interest. Yes, and he believed every word Williams had told him, although he would have called a straight

tale a lie. He thought over all he knew of the captain.

The night he had slipped into Gib., dodging the customs and all, his worn-out state hinting at anything; his laughing when he had asked the scorpion if he cared to buy "so small a ship"—Sylvester had not remarked the significance of the phrase at the time, but now it gripped him with the pinch of a million suggestions—his taking the money without counting it; his lazing around ever since until his mysterious coming that morning. And this was what it meant. It would be well to keep on the right side of this man. A man of parts—and clever. How had he found out who wanted those options?

Sylvester did not know this himself. He only knew Smith, the agent for the capitalists. But he would never let Williams know that he knew so little. Later on, when the captain had made much money because of what Sylvester told Smith—then, good friends, he would make the captain very drunk—oh, he knew the way—and he would find out. But just now was no time to take any chances with a promising friendship. Not that it mattered who was putting up the money.

"And we are good friends, no?" he repeated as Williams swung his bulk out of the shop.

"Not a bit particular—would do business with a jackal. Tell your man tomorrow morning, if he wants to see me. Very busy. Expect to go to London in a day or two—back right away. Keep your eyes open for anything good not in the shipping line, and let me know. May help you to make a shilling or two."

He threw one of his few remaining shillings at the dirty innkeeper, conscious that Sylvester would force him to divide, and left the place to which he had come as a suppliant—as a man.

III

WILLIAMS awoke early from a dream in which old Silas Rutherford had begged for a penny, and with Silas, needing bread, had been the woman and a long line of small Rutherfords. He got out of bed feeling like an expectant child on Christmas morning. And what did the stocking hold for him? He shaved, remembering the previous day and the days before that with an angry shame. But he would never be a crawler again. He thrilled to the joy of rebirth. What a pile of lies he had told Sylvester. Who the devil was behind the scorpion, anyhow? Yet he was proud of those lies. How much would he make out of this chance if he handled it right? Might get enough out of it to make up for the four hundred and fifty.

Then he made a large breakfast, lit a cigar and went out to the veranda. The man behind the scorpion would come to him, all right. And he did come, which further stimulated the intuitive faith Williams had in himself. He was half-way through the cigar when a boy brought him a card bearing the name "J. P. Smith," with no address or prefix.

And Smith himself was just as indefinite in appearance. An Englishman, apparently, with no trace of an accent to indicate his county. He was dressed neatly but simply, clean-shaven and about the same age as Williams.

"Know ships well, eh?" he remarked as they sat down in a quiet corner.

"Yes," Williams studied him; "went to sea for a while, until I came into my money. And you?"

"Never went to sea, but I served some time in an engineering shop. Got this scar there—a furnace-tender hit me with a hot slice-bar."

He turned his head so that Williams could see a scar across his left cheek, about three inches in length.

"I savvy," Williams grinned. "Had a few scraps myself, but they mostly left me alone on account of my size."

This exhausted their introductory substance. For a few minutes neither spoke; then Smith said thoughtfully:

"Sylvester gave me a great account of you, and, as he dare not fool me, I believe him and am willing to do business with you. He says you have already bought some options on ships, which seems to prove what he also says—that you know who the people are behind this thing. Do you?"

Williams looked at the other, their eyes met and held. The captain spoke quietly:

"I have the options, which, as you say, seems to prove that I do know. But don't you think it better—for me—to act as if I did not know who is really going to get the ships? I know I'd like it better if I

thought I was only selling to Mr. Smith. If we have to speak of—of those others—suppose we call them 'the firm'?"

Smith laughed softly and dropped his eyes.

"So," he murmured, "that's it. Well, I don't blame you, and I feel safe you won't talk. Now suppose I put my cards on the table. We have only just begun to buy options, and I was given the job of getting them because I am not a shipping man and would not be suspected. I had to come to Gibraltar on another matter, and, having heard about these scorpions and their ability to get ships cheap, I tied up this Sylvester—telling him nothing. So far we have done but little, but soon I will go to London and get busy, with more men to help me. But I have to have your options, of course, and, of course, you want to sell—bought them for that reason.

"Suppose you transfer all you have over to me and go out and get all you can in addition—I will agree to take all you can get. But, first, can you guarantee to a transfer from your option-forms to these—which are perhaps more generous?"

He handed Williams a printed option-form, which the captain read rapidly. As he had bought no options, he naturally had no objection to saying he could use the forms.

"I will buy," Smith was saying, "at ten shillings a ton for six months from date of transfer to me. You can make your commission and profit from the difference between the ten shillings and what you have to pay, can you not?"

Williams thought rapidly. His numerous conversations with other shipmasters had given him much inside information about the losses of many firms of ship-owners, apart from what was general knowledge. He had no doubt that many were anxious to sell and would welcome the chance to get a few shillings a ton for options. He knew, too, that his credit and reputation stood very high with Smith—Sylvester's extraordinary agitation had seen to that. By the way, why had Sylvester been so upset? He questioned Smith.

"Oh," Smith's face hardened with a curious expression, "oh, he was just scared you were going to cut in on him; that's all."

He became silent, as if with the suspicion that Sylvester knew more than he was supposed to.

"How much will you agree to deliver?" Smith seemed anxious to keep to business and get the matter settled.

Williams breathed deeply. This was his first plunge.

"Oh, I can promise a hundred thousand tons if you will agree to take all I can get over that at ten shillings a ton. Purchase price to be not more than an advance of a fourth of insured value."

"Will you sign a binding contract to that effect, agreeing to pay me ten shillings a ton damages for all of the hundred thousand you fail to deliver?"

"Got a copy of that contract?"

From among his many printed forms Smith produced a blank contract, pointing out the various clauses. It was a clear and concise form.

"You will have thirty days in which to deliver a hundred thousand tons to me, each option to run for six months from the date it is signed. Is all that satisfactory?"

"Seems so," Williams spoke slowly. "I am to contract to deliver to you options for six months on a hundred thousand tons of A1 steamers, no ship to be less than twenty-five-hundred tons, net, at ten shillings a ton to me. The options to be drawn on your forms, which you supply. If I fail to deliver, I am to pay you ten shillings a ton for all I lack of the hundred thousand. You also agree to buy, on the same terms, all over the hundred thousand that I can get hold of?"

"That last may be canceled at any time, though, when we get all we want," supplemented Smith.

"Sure—you're not buying all the earth. I know that. Of course, you know that I already have most of that hundred thousand. The options are with my lawyer in London; so all I have to do is transfer them from my forms to yours. I got them for longer than six months; so that's easy. And the final buyer in all cases, at no more than a fourth in excess of insured value, is to be J. P. Smith, not the firm, eh?"

"Don't talk like that," snapped Smith. "You're not supposed to know about the firm, you know."

"All right, Mr. Smith," Williams retorted, "but I do know this: that, while the firm has lots of money, you may not have. I have only your word, you know, that you represent them. If you want me to sign this contract—it means a lot to me,

and I'm financially responsible, you know—you must show me you do represent the firm. That is, you must show me the color of your money."

Which was rather a neat speech for a man with less than a shilling in the world and with a hotel bill of about seven pounds. But Smith was all smiles.

"My dear fellow, I didn't mean to be offensive. Of course you shall have the money. I meant cash, anyhow. I know all about you, and I want those options. Come over to the bank and sign the contract. If the fifty is not enough, you can have all the cash you need. Sylvester told me that you had tied up most of your loose capital—quite a lot in those options, of course."

"Oh, fifty will do," Williams spoke vaguely, having decided to let Smith run things at this stage, because his own knowledge of finance was hardly sufficient to let him lead.

At the bank the contract was signed in duplicate and duly witnessed. Then Smith handed Williams a check, and the husky sailor came nearer to fainting than ever before during his twenty-seven years. For Williams had expected fifty pounds as a sort of binder, and the check was for fifty thousand.

Through a sort of fog he heard Smith:

"You will deliver the options to my bank in London as fast as you get them. Here is the address. I will be in London myself shortly, as I said. Good luck to you, because I don't want damages but options."

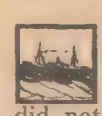
"You'll get them, all right," mumbled Williams, marveling at his first experience of the wonders of good credit.

Yet it was all simple enough. Smith believed that Williams already had some options and could get more, and he wanted them. Sylvester—and Sylvester dared not fool Smith—had rated Williams as first-class credit. What more natural than Smith should imagine it good business to tie Williams to a contract and pay cash? Williams was safe, and, if he failed to deliver, it simply meant the return of the unused money.

Besides, Mr. Smith knew a lot of things that he knew Williams could not know, even if he were willing to believe the captain knew who the final buyer would be. He knew, for instance, that Williams could not know why the firm was buying ships. Which reason Smith knew warranted his taking chances with much larger sums than he had given to the supposedly responsible Williams.

Yet, the firm, doing business in a large way, had, of course, its own corps of private detectives and kept a line on every man with whom it did business. Williams never knew that the charming American girl who made his voyage to London so pleasant and who put Mrs. Silas entirely out of his mind was Mrs. Smith minus her wedding-ring—who had been set to keep track of his doings until the last option had been delivered.

IV



THE Yellow Star Navigation Company was in bad shape, and the fact of its not being alone in its trouble did not compensate it for its difficulties. Freights were so low that the twenty freighters sailing with the yellow star on their funnels might as well have traveled in ballast for any profit they made. And the Pilling Brothers, sole owners, who had inherited the business from their father, saw only ruin ahead unless they could sell. But who would buy, with the books showing a loss for many months and practically every ship-owner in the United Kingdom with ships listed in the brokers' offices?

This being their mental and financial attitude, it was no wonder they almost doubted the cessation of miracles when Captain Williams—looking tremendous and prosperous in his new, shiny top-hat and frock coat—walked into their office, smiled pleasantly and told them he wanted to purchase a few steamers. Could they oblige him by selling?

They, of course, hadn't thought of doing such a thing. They owned twenty of the sweetest tramps on the seas, and there was a sentimental value about every keel, because their dead father had laid the foundations of the business. Besides, they hadn't an idle vessel.

Captain Williams was very sorry, but he intimated that he was willing to buy a six-months option on the twenty vessels, at five shillings a ton. The purchase price to be one-sixth in advance of the insured value.

The Pilling Brothers, gasping like men learning to swim in cold water, managed to ask for a few minutes alone so that they

could consider the offer. Williams pulled out a new watch, mentioned that he was very busy, that options could be picked up, he believed, at even better terms, and said he would wait five minutes.

Now, the total tonnage of the Yellow Star Line amounted to eighty thousand tons. Consequently, Williams had offered the Pillings twenty thousand pounds for the privilege of buying the twenty ships any time during the next six months. If he did not buy, the twenty thousand would be a clear gain to the Pillings; if he bought, it meant that they could sell out at about what the ships had cost them. It was all very satisfactory if the man were sane and responsible. For, with shipping conditions what they were, what on earth, or rather water, did a man want to buy options for?

The form was liberal, too. Thirty days notice, charters to be taken over if they were not fulfilled, but no charter for longer than usual voyage to be signed during option, and steamers to be delivered at a port to be later designated. Ten days in that port for inspection, during which demurrage would be paid by prospective buyer. Option money not to count toward purchase price. Yes, it was very satisfactory, if the man were responsible. If he were, well, it was his money, and he could spend it on wine, women, song or ships—and the least wise investment of the four would be ships.

The Pillings looked back on many a headache that lacked the pleasant memories of either song, sips or kisses but only reeked with columns of figures, crowding like distracted humans to the left side of the ledger. Yes, they would sell the options. The terms after calling were very liberal, and the purchase price was satisfactory. They never tried to bargain. They were too anxious, too much afraid the large angel might go elsewhere for his options.

The buyer was J. P. Smith. So, and Mr. Williams was his agent. Well and good. So, with details which may be omitted, the deal was closed, and Williams delivered eighty thousand tons of ship-options to Smith's bank, clearing for himself the decent profit of twenty thousand pounds. There was still in his possession ten thousand pounds of Smith's check, which he intended to put to the credit of Silas Rutherford.

This notion amused him. Since his rebirth he had so expanded that he felt too big for any petty revenge. Of course, he wouldn't mind doing something big, thus making the woman sorry she had turned him down. But nothing petty. Besides, he wanted to earn some more money, and he felt sure that Silas would sell. Thus he thought, very contented, as the train whirled him north to the city of Silas Rutherford, looking forward to the interview. The old man would certainly be startled.

But the black town enveloped him with a certain degree of nervousness as its grimy, outlying suburbs began to throw their tentacle-like streets about the railroad track, slowing the train. He had to fight down the heart-beats roused by the association of ideas, forcing himself to look upon his love for the woman as if it were a disgusting disease, stripping her of the halo with which he had once endowed her, seeing her as "a rag and a bone and a hank of hair"—and not too clean hair or rags at that. And finally, when the train reached the station, he achieved calm.

There was satisfaction about signing his name in the register of the best hotel, with his tall hat somewhat on the back of his head. Then, wisely, he took a cab to the office of a first-class lawyer, told him about the loss of the *Psyche*, omitting no details and leaving a handsome retainer against the possible Board of Trade investigation, which, however, would be unlikely to drag in anything about his crime. But it seemed best to play safe. He could put up good bail, if the worst happened, and leave Silas to hold the bag as he deserved. For Silas was not in the happy position of having all his assets comfortably stowed in his breast pocket and could never make a run for it, because he was anchored to his investments by the steel cable of miserliness

Worse, the poor old fool was stranded on the shoals of matrimony, unable to run for the open sea and safety, with a woman scraping at a hole in his ribs with every lift and settle he made to the tide of life. Williams, reveling in his metaphors, began to realize the benefits of freedom and to feel that what he had taken for the shackles of love was mere tissue-paper disguised in tinfoil. He devoured an excellent dinner and walked happily through the smoky

early dark of September, puffing no longer at a pipe but at a two-shilling cigar.

It was after office hours, but Williams had waited purposely, knowing the ways of Silas and wanting to meet him when alone. Of course, there was the chance of his staying home, now that he was married. But the captain thought otherwise, remembering cynically that the wedding had occurred some weeks before.

And he was right. True, for a few days the old man had lingered by his fireside—at home, rather, for Silas allowed no heat in his house before late October—but he had soon pleaded the call of business and gone back to his old habit of sitting in his lonely office, bemoaning his unlucky investment in ships. And his wife had made no objection. She had pretended, of course, but had secretly rejoiced when he left her. And Williams, stepping quietly, found the outer door open and went in.

He paused to think for a moment on the number of times he had entered that office full of a craven fear that he might lose his job. Then he squared his shoulders and went forward, still so quiet that Silas did not hear him but saw him framed in the doorway of the private office when he happened to look up. And for a moment the old man imagined he was looking at a ghost.

Then the captain shut the door, sat down by the desk and lit another cigar, but he did not remove his shiny hat.

"Didn't expect to see me, did you, you old thief?" he began pleasantly.

Silas made no reply. Williams was certainly not a ghost, but he was decidedly an apparition—what with the frock coat, the tall hat, the jewelry, the cigar and, above all, the assured manner. He was so unlike the old Williams that he was only just recognizable as that person. And the first coherent thought of Silas was the wish that Williams had always been as he then was—in which case the woman would have never thrown him down.

"I don't need that dirty four hundred and fifty—I'm a rich man now—but I'm going to make you sorry for what you did."

"I am sorry, Williams, very sorry." And so full of truth was the old voice that the captain believed him.

"You mean it?"

"Yes, I mean it. But not about the money. You wouldn't believe me if I said I was sorry about the money, and I don't blame you. But I'll give you a check for that right away, Williams. I wish I could give you back all I robbed you of so easily."

He looked so old, seemed so tired, so utterly disappointed with life, that Williams, who had come in anger, became sympathetic. He watched the veined, trembling hand writing the check and coughed to hide an unexpected swell of emotion.

"Yes, Williams—" the old man handed the captain the check—"maybe I was alone too long; maybe I was never meant for a married man, and maybe I got the wrong sort of a woman. But, just as I sit here, she sits at home—I want my ships to sink; she wants me to die. And I must leave her my money. It don't seem right not to, does it?"

There is a clannishness about sex. Williams had gone to Silas with anything but friendly feelings, but now he found himself taking sides with him—against the woman.

"If I was you, I'd give her fifty thousand and tell her to get a divorce. Get drunk, tell her to have witnesses and take a strange woman home with you some night. She'd jump at the chance to cry in court. It's the best way out of it—infidelity and cruelty, you know."

"But," wailed Silas, "I'm a deacon of my church—have been for forty-odd years."

"It's the devil how a man's youthful follies dog his life, isn't it?" answered Williams gravely. "But I wouldn't let that stop me. You can easily square the church with a fat check and a public confession of sin. Weep a bit and beg 'em to take you back into the fold. They'll like you all the better for it. It's a cinch."

The old man brightened; then he became unhappy.

"But think of the expense, Williams; think of the expense," he groaned. "With shipping the way it is."

"Why, as to that, I can help you," Williams exclaimed as if the idea had just come to him. "I have come into a tidy bit of money, you see. Not got it all through the courts yet, but got a good bit of it. I've always wanted to be a shipowner—all skippers do—and I wouldn't wonder if things looked up soon. As I said, I can not get hold of all my money just now, but I'll pay you five shillings a ton for an option to purchase your seven ships, at

their insured value. Option to run for six months."

"Say that all over again," the old man nearly screamed.

WILLIAMS repeated his statement, and the old man began to think, to look for a trap. This looked too good to be true, but, then, Williams always was a fool, and, if he wanted to tie up his inheritance in ships, that was his lookout. There was no way Silas could be cheated if he watched out.

"Looks to me like a temporary drop, that's all," he said oilily. "It wouldn't surprize me a bit to see freights take a big jump pretty soon. Who left you the money?"

"None of your bally business," snarled Williams. "And you can't fool me about freights going up. Me and my partner want seven steamers. If you won't sell at the price I mentioned—the option is because my money may be six months before getting through the court—I can easily get some one who will. Now, what are you going to do?"

"Price is all right if the form is." Silas spoke hastily.

It would never do to let this golden opportunity get away from him.

Williams gave him one of Smith's printed forms, and the old man read and reread it carefully.

"That's all right and regular. You must be buying from more than me to go to the expense of getting these special forms printed. But I ought to get more than the insured value."

"You can either take what I offered or keep your ships," Williams retorted, determined to keep Silas down to the price, although the agreement with Smith permitted him a fairly wide margin above it.

And finally Silas agreed, very inquisitive about the Smith party and the source of the inheritance—a curiosity Williams did not satisfy.

And finally the captain left the city without troubling to see the woman he had once adored and unaware that she had waited for him every day after her husband had told her about his wonderful change in condition and circumstance. He left without being troubled by the Board of Trade, feeling sorry for Silas. As a matter of fact, he was doing too well to hate anybody, for a telegram from Smith in London had invited him to dinner and to bring all the options with him he might have succeeded in buying.

And Smith was radiant. Admitting that everything was going splendidly, he paid Williams for his options and promised to pay for any more he could get. The contract, which had been carried out, was returned. Then they dined in a place which Williams had only heard about. But in his new dress-suit he acted as if he had eaten in such places ever since he began on solid food. And the wine flowed very freely.

"I can get you more options yet," promised Williams.

"Excellent, my dear friend, excellent. Do you want the money now or when you deliver?"

"Lord," Williams grinned expansively, some curious intuition making him pretend that the wine had affected him more than it really had, "Lord, I can trust you. We are all in the same boat, aren't we?"

Smith smiled as one knowing himself to be sober smiles at one he imagines to be drunk.

"Yes," he murmured, "all in the same boat, my dear Williams, but we didn't all get into the boat the same way, did we?"

Williams laughed fatuously. Then, his voice rather hoarse:

"No, we did not. You know how I got in. How did you—pier-head jump or first-class passenger?"

It was hardly a polite question, not a politely worded question, but Smith merely looked at the bottle and smiled again.

"As if you didn't know?" he suggested.

"Oh," Williams felt very much as when he first talked to the scorpion—as if he were trying to find his way in the dark. "Oh, I suppose you were born that way?"

It was a silly remark, but Smith glanced at him keenly—

"Think so?" he asked shortly.

"Know it, just as I know that I wasn't."

"You're a clever man," Smith complimented. "Far more so than even I at first believed." He spoke thoughtfully. "But we are the best of friends and can trust one another. Tell me, how did you find out that Sylvester was buying options—Gib's a queer place, in a way, for that. And how did you discover who is to be the final buyer—who are the firm, eh?"

Williams fumbled with the tip of a cigar, then clumsily bit it, again laughing foolishly.

"You know, Smith," he went on with the portentous gravity of the intoxicated, "I'm a good Englishman, but I ain't a fool about it. There's lots of people don't like to see an English ship sold to foreigners. But I don't care if the red ensign is changed to the Hottentot flag, if I can make money out of it. Did you say the Czar of Russia was president of the firm? Would you say that?"

"No, I wouldn't, but I will say you're drunk," Smith spoke impatiently. "What's the use of all this fencing about the thing. As you'll find when you try to buy, we have picked up about all the options we want. You know as well as I do that American capital is behind this buying. Of course, we had to keep it quiet and don't intend to talk now, but it was kind of annoying for you and me to pretend there was a mystery about it. You knew from the first meeting that I was an American, just as you know that America has been sorry she hadn't a merchant fleet.

"Where you got the hint I do not know, but you knew America lacked building facilities and that it would be cheaper to buy from the British, especially with shipping on the blink, as it has been. Besides, it would have taken too long to have built our own fleet. And watch freights go up when we call our options. But it's a bit of a joke on your country, eh? Won't the lion roar? Better become an American citizen, old man."

Williams' head sank forward as if he were falling asleep, and Smith raised his hand to shake him into wakefulness, muttering—

"Wonder if he only guessed—knowing that America was the only place with enough private capital to swing such a deal?"

V

SO THAT was it. What a blind bat he had been not to see through the scheme, Williams, still pretending drunkenness, thought as Smith saw him to his room. But it was all right. If Americans wanted to buy what the British wanted to sell, whose business was it? Of course, there would be a howl from the press. But why couldn't the British ship-owners have thought of a gigantic combine which would have given them power to make their own freight rates as the American buyers intended to do? Well, let them howl. They needed waking up in England.

Smith, leaving London the next day for some place he did not mention, called to say good-by and to remind Williams of his promise to say nothing about the big deal until it was consummated. And, when Williams promised readily enough, Smith rewarded him with the advice that he would be wasting his time to look for more options. There might be one or two ships not tied up which the owners were willing to sell, but he doubted it. And Williams found he was right. Liverpool, London, Belfast—every shipping town in the kingdom was visited by the captain. But not a single option could he purchase.

"Whew, some deal," he muttered as the size of the thing dawned upon him. "Well, I can't kick. It helped me."

And he decided to visit the town of his birth and indulge in a gentle spree.

But the spree did not stop at the gentle stage. It developed into the most involved experience of its kind in the captain's eventful life. Famous among his brother officers for his capacity, he was now financially able to do himself proud. So, when he had had enough of it, what with the time consumed running about England looking for options and the time taken up by that remarkable dissipation, some months had passed since his farewell with Smith. And events had occurred which the captain, never a reading man, had not heard about. For whenever a boon companion had attempted to discuss the news of the day, Williams had choked him off with more palatable suggestion.

Thus it happened, when coming out of the Turkish bath, he encountered one of the Pilling brothers, who looked as if he, also, had indulged freely.

"Been having a good time?" asked the jovial captain.

"I have. Smith has called the option, you know. In about a week our first ship will be delivered at the port designated. It's a relief to be free."

"What port?"

Williams was uninterested but asked for the sake of something to say, and Pilling told him, adding the information that the options given by several other ship-owners, friends of his, had likewise been called—for delivery at the same or adjacent ports.

"Humph," muttered Williams to himself as he walked along the beach, "the firm must have charters already from there—aren't wasting any time."

So he walked along the beach of the large watering-place that he remembered as a boy as a small fishing village and, arriving at the end of the esplanade, sat down on a bench to smoke. Presently an old man sat down by his side and began to read a newspaper.

"Terrible time coming," remarked the old man after a while.

"What do you mean?" drawled Williams indifferently.

"What do I mean?" The old man was annoyed. "Well, I'll explain, if you can not see it for yourself. It means war. That shooting of the archduke was the starter."

"Oh?" The captain dimly remembered hearing of that affair.

"Yes," went on the other, "I believe it was arranged. Those Germans would do anything. Cunning devils."

"Well, we should trouble," remarked Williams; "we won't get into any scrap. If we did, we have the navy."

The old man snorted.

"Yes, we have. But we'll be into it; you'll see that. And the Germans will find some way of starving us out."

"Eh?" Williams was interested at last.

"Yes, they will. Cunning devils. You can not tell them from Englishmen or Americans; they speak the language so well. Starve us out, they will. And the country's full of them—all spies. Why, there goes one of them now."

Williams stared at the well-dressed man with the single eyeglass who walked slowly past them.

"How do you know he's a German?" he whispered.

"That scar—on his cheek—look, quick," hissed the old man. "They get them dueling."

For a moment Williams sat as if petrified. Then with an oath he jumped to his feet and began to run toward the railway station, leaving the astounded old gentleman to speculate upon his sanity.

But Captain Williams was quite sane—as sane, if not more so, than ever before in his life—even if his mind was racing with maddening thoughts.

For it was all clear now. He saw the scheme from the very beginning. Yet its cleverness might well have been too much for the brightest of men. Sylvester had been scared because he had guessed—or knew—that Smith was a German—or, more likely, he was really a German spy and afraid of being discovered by the British. For Gib. is a bad place for captured spies. Besides, Sylvester was a British subject—consequently, if he were a spy, he was also a traitor. Which explained his agitation and Smith's curious expression when Williams had referred to it. And how careless Smith had been about the price to be paid for the steamers on delivery.

He had hardly mentioned it, allowing Williams to suggest the price. No wonder, when he knew that there was no intention of paying any delivery money. And how easy Smith had been about parting with the fifty thousand. Of course, such a thing might happen in business, and the contract signed by Williams in the Gibraltar bank had mentioned everything, gone into all the usual clauses, such as bottomry bonds, attachments and the like. How Smith must have smiled at that.

What did he care about attachments, once the ships were delivered into German ports? And what was fifty thousand in such a deal—when the option money was all that they were going to pay? Oh, he saw it. He saw it. And the options were called. Options on at least eight-tenths of the shipping of the British Empire. On the eve of war they were being delivered to German ports. The old man on the bench had said that Germany was only waiting till some prearranged moment before declaring war, and Williams believed him. But would any one else believe?

By God, he would force them to! Eight-tenths of British shipping lured into German ports for ten shillings or less a ton. Williams had given little heed that afternoon when Pilling had told him that all his ships were to be delivered in Hamburg and that the ships of other owners who had sold options were going to Bremen, Hamburg and other German ports. But he heeded now. Why, in a week or so all those ships would be in German ports, and, while the owners waited for their money, war would come! How cunning that time arrangement, which could be extended on excuse, with liberal demurrage.

Cunning. And the cunning of Smith up to the last. He had known Williams was pretending to be drunk, and, when he shook him in the restaurant, he had spoken as if he believed he were speaking to a drunken man—must have "guessed that America was the only country with enough private capital to swing such a deal." Cunning. Yes, he had been cunning. If the old man had not called attention to the scar on the face of that passing German or if that German had not passed at the time—but for that, Germany would have starved England into surrender in a few weeks. On what tiny incidents do the fates of empires hang. But would others believe as Williams believed?

Running frantically along the platform, his tall hat in his waving hand, the captain just caught the train. But would he be in time? Would he be believed? Not about the options—that could be proved—but about the certainty of war? There was no sense in sending a telegram. He would be considered crazy and arrested. And there was only one man to see—the Prime Minister. But what could the minister do, even if Williams made him believe that the option-buying was a war move?

The captain had no idea, but he had great faith in that important official. He would see him—even if he had to fight his way to him. The shipping of the empire tricked into Germany's ports—at ten shillings or less a ton. Yes, they were clever. But for the scar he would never have guessed it. Slice-bar, ——! He had thought it a queer, unhandy sort of weapon when Smith had told him the lie.

Williams did not sleep that night, and, when in the very early morning he reached London, he raced to the first taxi on the stand, shouting to the surprized driver—

"Number 10 Downing Street, and drive like ——!"

And the minister's servants were also surprized. They were accustomed to cranks of all sorts, but this big man seemed different. He didn't shout or rave, and his low, tense voice was commanding. Still, they couldn't let him in. It was too early, they explained. Would he come again later? Later they would be prepared for him.

But Williams refused to come later. He wanted to see the Prime Minister right away. If he were still in bed, he must be wakened. The matter could not wait. And he made as if to push by them.

The servants looked at one another—two big footmen, but neither of them anxious to tackle this big madman. One made a sign—phone the police while he held the fellow off with talk. But the captain saw the sign and guessed its meaning. With head down—top hat still in place—he was preparing to charge as he would have charged refractory sailors, when another voice broke in—

"What is it, James?"

And Williams saw the Prime Minister coming down the hall. He never remembered how he obtained that interview. His torrent of words was beyond his control. But he found himself sitting in a famous room alone with the great man—where the fate of Britain had so often been decided.

WHILE the world knows that, just before the outbreak of war, Germany nearly succeeded in trapping a part of the British navy in Kiel, this is the first published account of her almost successful attempt to trap eight-tenths of the British merchant fleet and so starve England into an early and ignominious surrender.

SANTANTA

BY W. A. STERNBERG

THAT portion of Kansas now included within the boundaries of Ellsworth County was difficult to reclaim from the red men. The country was well grassed and watered, with sheltering belts of timber along the streams, making it a favorite Indian hunting-ground, swarming as it was with buffalo, elk, antelope and smaller game. White buffalo-hunters soon learned how desirable the country was and made persistent and finally successful efforts to

establish homes there; all praise to those courageous pioneers!

General Hancock, in the Summer of 1867, was at Fort Harker organizing an expedition against the Indians; that campaign and its failure have passed into history, but an amusing incident connected with it will be recalled by surviving "old settlers." This incident might properly be entitled, "How the famous war-chief, Santanta, bull-conned the general."

Hancock made great effort to conciliate the hostiles. He had several talks with Santanta and his chiefs, carefully observing traditional Indian council formalities. The pipe of peace was smoked in solemn state and much big talk followed. The love and affection of the Great Father at Washington for his red children was carefully explained, as it had been time and again for more than a hundred years. Many valuable presents were made the Indians, and among others General Hancock gave Santanta a complete major-general's uniform; sword, sash, epaulets, and gorgeous cocked hat and plume. But the talks all ended in smoke.

General Hancock wanted to get his troops alongside the Indian camp, but Santanta divined his purpose and prolonged the talk until all his women and children got away; as soon as this was safely accomplished, he and his warriors made themselves scarce. This expedition proving a failure, it was soon disbanded.

Not long before General Hancock's first talk with Santanta the Indians had captured a Government ambulance with its team of four mules. Santanta represented to the general the capture of this ambulance was not approved by him, that it was the act of some of his young men, who, he was sorry to say, did not love their Father in Washington as Santanta did. That it would afford him great pleasure to return the Great Father his mules and ambulance, but unfortunately at that moment he was off color with his braves by reason of his great love for the white man, and rival chiefs pointed the finger of scorn at him, saying he had a white man's heart. That if Santanta should take these mules and ambulance from the young men, they would not listen when he should urge them to be like Santanta, a friend of the white man and obey the great white chief. And much more of the same chaff—all with one object, which he accomplished. The capture of the mules and ambulance—and the killing of the driver—was passed over, and they tacitly went with the other presents.

I have a vivid recollection—the danger from Indians having passed until grass should be green again—being at Fort Harker one day, of seeing a four-mule ambulance rapidly approaching the post along the Fort Zara trail, the mules lashed to a gallop by a filthy breech-clouted Indian. The curtains had been cut away, and there in his major-general's uniform, epaulets, cocked hat, plume and all, with boiled shirt worn outside his trousers, arms folded, face covered with dirt and dignity, sat the renowned terror of the plains, the redoubtable Santanta. His driver put the mules around the parade-ground once or twice, encouraging them with such fiendish yells as only an Indian can produce. When the importance of his chief had been sufficiently exhibited, he stopped, and Santanta paid a visit of state to his brother, General Sully.

Santanta was low in stature, broad-shouldered, deep-chested and crooked-legged, and, seated there in a captured Government ambulance, wearing the uniform of a major-general in the United States Army, his broad face greasy and horrid, he made a picture which was not a caricature but a sad commentary on the Government's then paternal method of dealing with Indians.

With the next season's grass came those dark and bloody days which are burned deep into the memory of the surviving early settlers of Lincoln and Ellsworth Counties and which established Santanta's reputation as one of the most cruel savages the plains ever produced.

A Night in the Wilderness

BY

WALT McDOUGALL

Author of "Pikers Afloat."

I HAD been in the out-of-the-way English inn for three days before I noticed that Jarvis wore service stripes. He was flitting noiselessly, like a barn swallow, about the low-ceiled tap-room where I had sat alone for an idle hour, when I remarked—

"I see you've served, Jarvis."

"Harrdly, sor. I got *strafed* the very first day I landed in Belgium, sor. In the neck, sor. I wasn't out of England a week."

"Are you an Irishman, Jarvis?" I queried.

"Well, not exactly, sor. Me mother was a Jewess and me father a Yorkshireman, but I was born and raised in Dublin until I was seventeen years old."

"Ireland must be some melting-pot!" I mused aloud.

"Well, sor, it is in a way, but not like the States, sor. I've been to Hamerica, sor."

"Oho! I thought I detected an American accent!"

"Well, ye'd harrdly say that, sor. I wasn't there long enough for that!"

"Were you in New York?" I questioned, for his respectful and serious air seemed to mask a certain sly humor that promised some amusement.

He seemed more like a schoolmaster than a waiter.

"In New York, yes, sor, and to Greenwood Lake, New Jersey. Do you know that place, sor?" he asked.

"Every foot of it," I replied. "I've been going there since I was a boy."

"Indade! I've only met three people in me life that had visited it. Then, sor, you may have known Degraw's Hotel, loikely?"

"As well as my own club. But I don't recall you, Jarvis."

"'Twas manny years ago, sor, and I wasn't there long," he said with a sigh, gazing reflectively down the hedge-bordered lane. "It's sorry I am, often enough, that I didn't stick it out."

"What was the matter with Greenwood Lake?" I demanded.

"Faith, nawthin' at all, sor!" he answered as if surprized. "The Lake was perfectly satisfactory—a good bit of all right, sor. But I had a peculiar experience there, one that I don't talk about much."

Without a hint of warning that I was about to get a jolt from out of the halcyon, carefree life of long ago, I spoke up:

"Well, this is a good talking day. Loosen up the tale! Shoot!"

'TWAS whin I was just comin' twinty-one, whin I was workin' in a hotel in Liverpool, that I got the notion of immigratin' to Hamerica, sor; whin one o' thim steamship wars was on and tickets were cheap. I landed in New York with a letter of ricommendation to a parrty in Omaha, but the very day I landed, before I found out where Omaha was, Mr. Degraw hired me for a bartender, at the Imployment Bureau. He took me across the ferry and put me on the train, intinding to send me alone, but then he changed his mind. Says he:

"I'm afraid. Yer so new to the counthry that somebody'll be snatchin' you and puttin' yer into a silo! I'll go with yer!"

'Twas a fine counthry, sor, rollin' and with manny fine towns and houses. Whin we got up into the mountains where 'twas wild and wooded, he says to me—

"And what is it you're lookin' for so sharply, me man?"

Whin I told him that I was watching for to see the aborigines and the buffaloes, he says, says he:

"Buffalo Bill killed the last one in New Jersey in the Spring of '85, and the Injins all wear regular clothes now like human bein's. But you'll find they haven't changed their manners, me lad, whin you see them lined up before the bar, especially the ones from Essex County, d'ye mind!"

"And the cowboys, sor, with their lassoos and horses? I've seen only farmin' machinery," I says.

"Oh, you'll not see a cowboy this side of Chicago!" says Mr. Degraw. "You must know," says he, "that there's little excitement up here in the mountains. All the bad-men, gun-fighters and train-robbers hang out in the big cities, and, if you're keen for that sort of life, you should have stayed in New York."

The weather was bally hot, sor, the thermometer hanging in the car registerin' all of eighty-three. Quite bloomin' tropical, indeed! But, about the time I was minded to remove my coat as my employer and everybody else had done, we arrived in higher regions, and I preserved my self-respect, sor. It was much cooler at the Lake.

The bar, sor, was in the pool-room, near the water some distance from the hotel; the stock was very superior, and I thought that whole situation wasn't half bad. The landlord instructed me in mixin' many Hamerican drinks next mornin'. In the daytime 'twas mostly lydies who frequented the pool-room, playin' the game very skillfully, I should say, but I gathered from their conversation that Saturdays and Sundays were much enlivened by the presence of husbands.

It was an extraordinary quiet spot, sor, my word! I anticipated much from the expected arrival towards evening of a favorite visitor, a newspaper-man from Newark, in the Province of New Jersey, by name of Mack, who was an inveterate joker.

I gathered the idea that he was some sort of a big mogul from hearing Mrs. Degraw tell another lydy that Mack was a prince; that he was a genuine Indian. I was charmed at the idea, don't you know, of encountering one of the aboriginal princes, for Mr. Degraw had told me that they were rapidly passing away because of their adoption of the vice of cigaret smoking.

It was an orfal hot day, incredible hot, sor, witherin', as you might say, but nobody seemed to mind it. Actually, the landlord's wife had worn a beaver cape over her shoulders that mornin'. 'Twas eighty-six at three o'clock when Mr. Mack and his friends arrived, bringing with him, for their entertainment, a brass band of five men. He was a man in his forties, fat, dark-haired, with piercing brown eyes and a grand outjutting nose. But his skin was as fair as your own, sor.

Still, he had the gloomy stern look that one naturally would expect in an Indian chief, and the preposterous heat seemed to have no effect upon him or his friends except to give 'em a thirst. He was very affable indeed—no royal airs at all—and he asked me manny questions about the old counthry after the landlord told him I was from Ireland—especially about banshees, pixies and the likes o' that.

There was two of them that hadn't come, by name of O'Toole and O'Keefe, being kept by other ingagements until night, when they were comin' by carriage, a fifty-mile trip! Sorry the day they ever started! The German band serenaded the ladies at the hotel, and then they all took possession of the pool-room—all but the Indian prince and an artist chap, who went out fishin'. I asked Mr. Degraw what his Highness preferred in the way of liquor.

"What d'ye mean, Highness?" says he.

"The Indian prince, sor. Mr. Mack, sor," I says.

"Who told you he was an Injin?" he asks.

"I heard your good lydy say so, sor, yesterday. I presume this is the same gentleman, sor," says I.

"Gosh! It's a mighty good thing, young feller, that you spoke to me about him. If he suspected that you knew he was an Injin, it's ten to one that he'd scalp you before you knew he had his knife out! Don't open your face and let out any 'highness' or 'prince' stuff while he's here—not on your hatpin! Not on your hatpin!" says he!

If all Hamericans were like that parrty, Prohibition would have come in the States long years ago through a natural failure of supplies, sor! Sure, they kept Degraw and me busy ordering things by names that

I more than suspect they invented right there, and more than one deadly quarrel Degraw only previnted by smoothness and blarney, the wise man! The German band, doubtless, aided him in that, begad! It was a fine one!

WHEN the prince returned, he brought with him a snake he'd just caught. He handled it in a manner to chill your blood. They told me he had a fondness for the creatures and often carried them about in his pockets. He said it was a brindled rattlesnake and extremely poisonous but that he had it charmed, as you might say, and offered to let me hold it in my hands.

Wurroo! Sor, I can feel at this minute the deadly chill that struck down my legs as he reached the squirmin' sarpent toward me! He said he'd keep it to show Petey O'Toole, who was addicted to snakes even when he was sober, and he put it into his trousers pocket!

For men of their age—for they were all years older than me—that was the liveliest crowd I ever saw. They frolicked like schoolboys and drank like bloomin' hatters. With wrastlin' and boxin' and jumpin' in that torrid heat, sor, they sported till sundown, and in the cool o' the evenin' they sat around listening to the sweet strains of the band.

By and by they began to boast of their doin's to annoy Mr. Degraw, for I had soon discovered that he was the county sheriff. And, sor, I heard some shockin' details of crime. But Degraw only laughed and said it was lucky for them that these deeds had been outlawed by the Immunity Act, or they'd be dissolving in quicklime that very hour. And a milder-lookin' lot of blokes you couldn't have found on anny Summer night the world over!

Every onct in a while somebody would regret the absince of O'Toole and O'Keefe, and that would start another story about one or the other of these men, something that would start off innocint, belike, and wind up with the creeps in your liver, sor!

"D'ye mind," says one, "the time they stole the red-hot stove from the Marnin' Register Office and piled pavin' stones agin the door and sat there in the snow-storm till daylight drinkin' applejack while the police was cartin' away the stones, afraid to meddle with 'em?"

"I do that!" says the prince. "'Twas the very next day that O'Keefe attacked me with a Cuban machete in Murray's saloon, and I had to lay him out with a brass cuspidor. I carry the scar of the cut he gave me to this day. But those were rough old times! You remember the night O'Toole got the cab-drivers into Mink's to buy them a drink and we stole every cab in Newark and drove to Belleville with them?"

"Yes. That was awful! O'Keefe had no excuse for killin' the mayor of Belleville, even if it was a Prohibition town!" says another chap. "Just because the mayor called him a white-livered Home Rule mick from Galway! 'Twasn't right!"

You may see, sor, that I did not regret the absince of these two men from this social gatherin', for I could readily perceive that they were desperate characters of the type depicted by Bret Harrte in his "Jumpin' Frog" stories, although I gathered that they were Irishmen of a sort. But a bit later we heard shots in the distance, and almost immediately afterward came the two desperadoes in the vehicle they call by the curious name of "buggy," sor. One of them—that was O'Toole—was a small, red-headed, skinny chap with a mild eye, the verry last you'd take for a bad one, and the other was more like a parson than a hardened murderer, a fine, tall, clean-lookin' lad with curly hair but very profane with his language.

"Hurroo! We did the fifty miles in two and a half hours, swoppin' horses every five miles!" sings out O'Keefe.

"You're a liar. It can't be did!" says the prince.

"You're no gentleman, you decrepit old horse-thief. It was did!" says O'Toole, climbin' down in a hurry. "We'll have the constables of nine towns after us for shooting up each burg we passed through!"

They all crowded indoors, and O'Keefe yells out:

"Rum! Rum! And a bucket of blood!"

Mr. Degraw whispers to me:

"Be discreet, me boy, in talkin' to these birds. They've been drinkin' some; I can see that. We don't want any trouble here tonight!"

"Give us a couple of nitroglycerin cocktails!" yells O'Keefe.

"We are all out of nitroglycerin," says Mr. Degraw very smooth.

"Nix! Nix! None of that stuff!" O'Toole bawls out, and the man reaches for his hip pocket, his little eyes blazin'.

"Hold on! Don't draw, for you might have to shoot!" says Degraw as cool as you please. "I may have some up at the house."

He went after it, and he was gone some time. The prince motioned O'Toole to come outside, and I could see him talkin' earnestly to him in the light from the doorway. I conjectured that he was advisin' him to act with discretion.

Well, sor, if I could have been whisked out o' that and over to old Ireland by givin' up ten years o' my life, I'd gladly have done it! Every time O'Toole's eye rested on me, my insides froze—and 'twas a hot night, d'ye mind! When Mr. Degraw came back, he had a tumbler half full of some white stuff that he hands to O'Toole, and says he:

"Here's your soul-poisoner, and may you choke! I had to steal it from under old Duy Foster's bed while he was asleep. If he'd woke up, he would have bored me!"

O'Toole takes it, and says he:

"None of your tricks! Are you sure you're not trying to slip over some of that turpentine flavorin' or French perfume like you did the last time!"

"Taste it, you rattlesnake!" says Degraw.

O'Toole tasted it, smiled and passed it to O'Keefe.

" 'Tis the real old safe-blowin' juice—and fresh!" says he. "Mix the cocktails—and for all hands, d'ye mind."

Then they all began to protest that they didn't drink that deadly stuff, but O'Keefe pulls out a pistol, sor, and, when the drinks was mixed, they drank them without objectin'. O'Toole shook his head with his mouth wide open, and says he, "Boys, if I gritted my teeth, I'd blast my jaw off! Now it's whisky and other soft stuff that I'll have to stick to tonight. O'Keefe, I'll play you a game of pool, though my hands are raw from drivin' them fiery, untamed steeds."

With that they went to playing pool, me watchin' them, and divvle a one of 'em was showin' any effects from drinkin' the stuff, sor! The prince whispered to Degraw, and he came to me and told me to water some whisky in a bottle and serve these two with it as they were like to make trouble. I done that same, and the very next time they took a drink they spat and looked hard at me. My blood turned to ice, sor! O'Toole put his hand across O'Keefe's chest, and says he:

"Hold on, John, no killin'! Mabbe the boy has a mother as you had onct."

"Since when has a mere mother—or even a mother-in-law, for the matter o' that—stopped you or me, Petey O'Toole! He's watered our booze!"

The whole crowd threw themselves on them, and Degraw told them I'd given them whisky out of the bottle reserved for the man with delirium trimmins that was boarding there. Finally O'Keefe calmed down and went back to the pool-table. The prince called on the band for music. I could see that there was bad blood between the two, and I never took my eyes off them, sor. In the midst of the music they began to quarrel over the game, callin' each other mortal bad names. Just as the band stopped playin', O'Keefe shook his fist in O'Toole's face, and says he—

"You half-portion of a Hackensack coprolite!"

I mind the word well. O'Toole stepped back, pulled out a revolver and with a yell fired straight at O'Keefe's stomach, not a yard away! He fell without a word—just crumpled up, dropped on his face, turned over and lay still there beside the pool-table.

EVEN in that horrible moment, sor, I noticed that all of them turned and looked at me instead of at the murderer. That is, all except the German band, who were too frightened to move. O'Toole dropped the pistol and darted out into the darkness, but the crowd fell over each other to get out after him. I did not feel that it was my duty to join them, as I was a foreigner, don't you know, but I would have been of no service as I was badly funked.

I suppose I was as pale as the band-leader, who sat staring at the corpse in horror. One man soon returned and asked me where he could get a rope to hang the murderer with when they caught him. Before I could reply, he took down Mrs. Degraw's beaver cape that hung on a peg on the wall and covered up the head and shoulders of the dead man in a solemn and reverent manner that quite touched me, sor.

I could hear them yellin' and makin' uncouth sounds in the distance for some time as they searched, but soon they all drifted in—all but the prince and Degraw. They told me that these two, who were old woodsmen, would soon round up the black-hearted spalpeen and bring him back dead or alive. The prince, they said, was quite likely to kill him first and ask questions afterward. They told me to remember every detail, for I would be the most important witness, and this made me very nervous. Every few minutes one or two of them were compelled by their emotions to go outside.

Suddenly there came a wild, thrillin' yell from out of the dark, starless night. Out they rushed. Between the dead man inside and a murderer loose outside I felt like sittin' tight, sor. When they came in, they had the artist chap, drippin' wet, who said that he had been pushed into the lake by some unseen hand. He thought it was O'Toole's. I was much upset by their indecent levity, sor, for they split their sides at his misfortune even in the presence of the corpse. It was quite shockin'!

None of them knew the bally counthry about there, and they were afraid of bein' lost in the dark. Besides, O'Toole was well armed, having another pistol besides the one he had dropped, as I omitted to mention, beside the corpse and which had been laid behind the bar right near me, which increased my nervous horrors. They knew so many details about the lives of O'Toole and O'Keefe and related so many of them, sor, that I was really made quite ill.

Finally along about midnight a loud war-whoop that chilled my veins called them out, and soon they returned with the villain O'Toole. They had evidently handled him roughly enough, and Sheriff Degraw had handcuffed him so that he was quite harmless, as you might say. But he glared at me as if about to spring at me, and the artist chap got between us. And he says:

"Let us give this fiend in human shape a dose of lynch-law right here and now and string him up. He's as guilty as ——," says he, "and he's cheated the gallows many times already. You remember how he got off after killing the old woman over at Smoky Hollow?"

"We do that," says the prince. "And do you mind how he slipped out of the noose the time he cut the throats of the two school-teachers in Goshen?"

"Sure! He's a bally bad one!" said the sheriff. "It's agin my oath of office to countenance such work, but we'll try him tonight."

"Can't you wait until tomorrow so I can send for a lawyer?" asks O'Toole with a groan.

"We can not!" says the prince. "You'll have to play your hand alone this time, Petey, me boy."

So they started to try him. They made me give my testimony first. It was a sweatin' job, sor, with O'Toole's devilish eyes burnin' holes into me bewhilst. When I was through, Degraw says:

"We saw it all. A hundred witnesses wouldn't add to the proof. We'll hang him on young Jarvis' evidence alone."

"He's done for me!" says O'Toole. "It's lucky for him that this is a dirty lynch-law trial, or I'd get him sure later. As it is, my spook will hant you, young feller, till your dyin' day! May your food choke you! May your booze taste like bilge-water! May your feet be cold in Winter and roast in Summer! And may your wife take your earnings to Asbury Park!"

"Be reasonable, O'Toole!" says the prince. "The boy's only done his duty to the counthry ——"

"He's no better than a lousy informer!" cries O'Toole. "Men, I ask you as a personal favor not to hang me like a horse-thief! Shoot me and let me die like the good old scout I am! O'Keefe only got what was comin' to him, and well he deserved it. He stole both my wives. I forgave him and, in fact, paid the carfare on one occasion. I overlooks his weakness when he double-crossed me the time we robbed the Prudential Bank and killed the old cashier, who was my second-cousin. But he went too far for human endurance the night he set the opera house on fire and burned up ninety-six women and children!"

"Ah! Did he do that deed?" asks Degraw. He was that overcome he leans on the shoulder of the prince, and both of them were sobbin', sor. But the prince with a deep frown says:

"Raw stuff, Petey, and old! This isn't a Newark jury."

"Take off these cuffs and shoot me quick!" says the man. "I have thirty dollars in me jeans. Send them to the Elk's Lodge for to bury me with."

"Hand them here," says the artist chap. "I'll attend to that."

"The —— you will!" says O'Toole. "Only over my dead body, you four-eyed ink-slinger! I'll match you for the thirty!"

Degraw took off the handcuffs and says, says he:

"Now, stand over here by the corpse. Jarvis, you hand me that gun on the shelf yonder. I'll shoot you myself."

Faith, I was mighty slow in reachin' for the weapon, as you may well believe, sor, and, before I laid my hand on it, O'Toole leaped through the door like a bloomin' rabbit and was gone wid the whole pack after him, yellin' like fiends! All, that is, but the artist chap, and he says in great alarm:

"Hide behind the bar, lad! You're as good as dead if he doubles back in the dark to get you! It was your evidence that convicted him, and he'll take a chance to pay you back!"

I laid myself down behind the bar, and there I stayed until they all returned.

"We'll put the bloodhounds on his trail in the morning—if I can finish with my hayin'," says the sheriff.

"It's on my mind that he'll drown hisself in the lake," says the prince. "He'll never be able to survive the loss of O'Keefe. They were partners in crime for many years, and O'Keefe's ghost will hant him until he makes away with hisself—you can gamble on that."

Just then the bandmaster stands up rather unsteadily, and says he—

"Vot iss the matter mit playin' a dirge for dot dead man, alretty?"

"That's a splendid idea. O'Keefe was fond of music!"

WELL, sor, the band, which was pretty well soused, as you might say, played somethin' slow and sad-like, and it affected their hearers so that some of them had to go outside to hide their feelin's. But the prince spoiled it all by ordering drinks, and then they missed me. Degraw came behind the bar, and says he—

"And what do you there?" he asks.

"They say he's apt to come back for me," says I. "Sor, could I go to my room?"

"Shucks! That cheap Irish loafer! That imitation barroom scrapper! He won't have the sand to come within five miles of me! I'd bore him as full of holes as a Swiss cheese!" says Degraw.

With that I looks up, and there stands O'Toole, glaring down through the window. The sheriff yelled, and everybody rushed outside. I stood up and grabbed the pistol just as he leaps into the room. Sor, I was that scared I points the gun straight at his chest and fires, but he never turns a hair! I never fired a pistol before in my life, and I expected to see him drop at my feet. But instead he steps up and says:

"You'd do better work with a brick! Gimme a drink, you poor boob!"

I drops the gun and hands him the bottle, and there he stood drinkin' out of it when the gang rushes back.

"Boys, I give up!" he sings out. "I'm through! I'm afraid of the dark out there, and the Willies are chasin' me. O'Keefe's spook, all pale and wavin' blue flames, follows me about and calls me a four-flushin' piker! String me up and end my misery!"

My word, sor, I was flabbergasted!

"O'Keefe's spook!" said the prince. "That man hasn't been croaked long enough to have a spook! The human jack-rabbit never had soul enough to get an X-ray of a spook that would show three feet away! For that matter, we've been prancin' around here for two hours without overhauling the corpse. How do we know that he is dead, at all, at all?"

"Oh, he's croaked, all right!" says the artist chap. "Rigor mortis and alcoholic decomposition set in long ago. He smells like sour mash! He's laid there under that fur cape without twitchin' since ten o'clock, but let the murderer lay his hand on the dead body and make a test. That will prove it!"

"Never! Never!" groaned the murderer, shrinkin' back and takin' a pull on the bottle. "Let this bartender do it!"

"Nonsense!" says the prince. "There's one sure test. Tickle the stiff just under the first rib. If he moves, there's life in him."

Well, sor, just as one of them stepped toward the corpse, it drew up its legs over its stomach! My flesh crept, and my hair stood up. Then I saw that it was protectin' itself against the expected

tickling. But, before I could realize what it meant, O'Keefe throws off the fur cape and gets up on his feet! Says he:

"You —— fools must think this is a five-reel film production! Gimme a drink, quick! My ——! My mouth tastes like the subway, and my belly is so sore from holdin' in the laughs that I feel as if I had appendicitis!"

JARVIS paused a moment before he made the final confession of his tale.

"Then, sor, it came to me in a flash that they had been spoofin' me all along! They were blank cartridges in the pistols!"

"And then, Jarvis, you went over the top and tried to clean out the bunch."

"I did that, sor! I handed that O'Toole desperaydo one that jolted him a good bit, but they overpowered me. They told me that one poke proved my courage, and they all shook hands with me, and the band played 'The Wearin' of the Green,' and, sor, I think we got a bit drunk, sor. But how did you happen to guess what I did, sor?"

"I didn't guess, Jarvis. I was there that night. I am the artist chap, and Harry Mack, the prince, was my brother. I fell in the lake while trying to get a peep at your face. Man! Man! If I should laugh now as we laughed that night, I'd crack something! Ah, that was long, long ago, old-timer. O'Toole has been county treasurer for years; O'Keefe owns a newspaper. And Harry has gone over, and there's nobody can do such things now!"

"But, sor, for the life of me, I never could understand why they did it, sor. They couldn't have expected to find me there, the poor greenhorn, and yet they started off their spoofin' the minute they came! And them two the worst of all, sor! Did the landlord play the trick on me, sor?"

"Never, Jarvis! He was no jokesmith. It was your innocent Irish face did it, all on the spur of the moment, for those were gifted improvisers, and a hint to O'Toole and O'Keefe was enough."

"Well, annyway, I went back to old Ireland three days after, and that's all I ever see of the States, sor."

THE WAGON-BOX FIGHT

by E. A. BRININSTOOL

UNQUESTIONABLY the greatest battle between white men and Indians ever fought in the West—taking into consideration the small number of whites and the awful death-toll they inflicted—was what is known historically as the Wagon-box Fight of August 2, 1867, which occurred some twenty miles southeast of the present city of Sheridan, Wyoming, and about six miles from old Fort Phil Kearney, at that time one of the important military posts on the new wagon road which had been opened by the Government to Bozeman, Montana. In this fight, thirty-two soldiers and civilian wood-choppers, stationed at the fort, were surrounded in a corral made of the beds of the wagons used in transporting logs to the fort, by three thousand Sioux warriors under command of Chief Red Cloud, and after a most terrific engagement lasting from about seven in the morning until two or three in the afternoon were relieved by a detachment from the fort.

The most amazing part of this fight is the fact that the whites lost but three men killed and four or five wounded, while the Indian loss, as acknowledged some years later by Red Cloud, and verified from other Indian sources, was 1137. This was the first real battle between whites and Indians in which breech-loading rifles were used by the former against the bows and arrows and old-fashioned firearms of the savages.

In anticipation of a battle during the process of cutting and transporting logs to the fort to finish needed buildings, the boxes from fourteen wagons had been removed and arranged in a semicircle on the level plain a short distance from where

the wood-choppers were at work, being guarded at their task by soldiers from the fort. Several extra rifles apiece and ten thousand rounds of ammunition were two of the reasons for the awful slaughter inflicted by the soldiers and wood-choppers. On the morning of August 2, 1867, the wood-choppers were barely at their task when Indians by the hundreds swarmed from the ravines and gullies where the pine logs were being cut.

Of the number at work, thirty-two managed to retreat in safety to the wagon-box corral, where, under the command of Capt. J. W. Powell and Lieut. John Jenness, preparations for a stubborn fight were immediately begun, although their enemies outnumbered them nearly a hundred to one.

Confident of being able to overwhelm the little party, Chief Red Cloud devoted some little time to preparations for the battle. Then a force of five hundred of his leading warriors, mounted on their war-ponies, detached themselves from the main command and started for the little corral out on the level plain. Whooping and yelling, on they came with ponies on the run. Not a shot was fired from the corral until the horde of screeching savages were within fifty yards, when a perfect sheet of flame ringed the corral, and a rain of bullets was poured into the advancing ranks.

The firing was not one solid volley and then, silence, as the Indians had anticipated, but it was a steady and persistent stream of fire, which mowed them down in scores. The astonished braves could not understand the rapidity of the firing, knowing nothing of the new breech-loading arms which had been supplied to the soldiers but a very few days before. In the front of the corral where the brunt of the charge had been met, horses and men were cut down as by some giant mowing-machine.

Dazed and chagrined by the failure of the first charge, the Sioux fled back out of range of those deadly rifles, where Red Cloud consulted with other chiefs upon another plan. Seven hundred Indians were ordered to prepare themselves as a skirmishing party. They were led by the great Red Cloud's nephew in person. Supporting them and intended to constitute the main attack were the whole remaining body, numbering nearly two thousand warriors.

In the first attack but one of the whites was killed and two severely wounded. Again the Indians advanced and again the fire belched forth from the corral, mowing down the savages in scores. The Indians could not account for the sustained and frightful fire.

"The white man must have made bad medicine," they said afterward.

Charge after charge was made on the heroic little band huddled within their miniature fort, but each was successfully repulsed. The firing was heard at the fort and relief was sent, before which the Indians retreated. They had "got enough."

Today but three men are known to be alive who took part in that most remarkable battle. They are Sergt. Sam S. Gibson of Omaha, Nebraska, Frederick Claus of Lincoln, Nebraska, and M. Littman of St. Louis.

Some historians have contended that the wagon-boxes were lined with boiler iron, which accounted for the small loss suffered by the whites, but Sergt. Gibson has informed the writer that such is not the case.

"They were the ordinary wagon-boxes made out of inch pine boards," said Gibson. "Most of the bullets fired by the Sioux splintered the tops of the boxes to slivers, but our loss was slight compared to that which we inflicted."

In reminiscing regarding the Wagon-box Fight, about 1888 on the Pine Ridge reservation, Chief Red Cloud, then an old man, said he went into the fight with over three thousand braves and lost over half. He was asked if he meant that over fifteen hundred were killed. The old chief sorrowfully shook his head and replied:

"I lost them. They never fought again."

RESCUED

BY

CLYDE B. HOUGH

Author of "The Vengeance of Rooney," "An Hour," etc.

IT WAS a barbarously decorated big room in the *casa* of Datto Parang. The *casa* stood on the west coast of Tawi Tawi, away down under the pale rays of the Southern Cross.

Hanging against the walls of the room on all sides were coarse-woven, gorgeously colored tapestries, and fastened to them were spears, shields, bolos and krises of various designs. Also there was a dried and shriveled head or two—silent, gruesome proof of Parang's personal prowess as a warrior. The furniture consisted of a number of chairs made of some hard, reddish wood, crudely but fantastically carved. In the center of the room was a long table of pure ebony, its top polished to a mirror finish. At one side of the table sat the *datto*, and opposite him was Crawson, white man, renegade, commander-in-chief of the *datto's* motley but vicious army.

On the table between them stood a teakwood box which was about ten inches long, six by six, bound with heavy iron bands and secured with six powerful locks—two on either side and one at each end. There were also iron rings for handles at each end. The box had no hinges. To open it, the smooth, snug-fitting lid was merely lifted off after all six locks had been unfastened.

Parang produced a ring containing six keys, unlocked each of the locks, lifted off the lid and burrowed his hand, wrist-deep, into the contents—five hundred thousand dollars in jewels. There were diamonds, rubies, pearls, emeralds and a plentiful mixture of the other and less noted kinds. The *datto* lifted his hand, palm up, and slowly spread his fingers. There followed a shower like the falling of varigated hail, and the jewels dropped back into the box, scintillating, flashing every color of the rainbow.

Crawson gazed at the little pebbles hungrily as they fell through the *datto's* fingers, sparkling and flashing signals of ease, of creature comfort. Five hundred thousand dollars in portable, disposable form. In Sydney, in Paris, with that box—what a life! Crawson had not been in Sydney or in Paris, but he had imagination and gave it free rein.

Parang's small black eyes glowed fanatically. Here, indeed, was wealth to buy many guns and more bullets with which to slay the hated Christians. The *datto* planned to unite the entire Moro forces and sweep the archipelago from Sulu to Luzon, to drive out the Americans and enslave all Christian natives. Crawson had made him believe it possible.

In fact, it was Crawson who had originated the idea of accumulating a fund to buy arms and ammunition. Shortly after he had established himself as commander of the *datto's* army, he laid before the latter his plan for a systematic session of looting to be perpetrated in Mindanao, the proceeds of these incursions to be saved until the sum reached a total of five hundred thousand dollars.

"But, *señor*," protested the *datto*, "all of the rice and bullocks and potatoes in Tawi Tawi and Mindanao put together are not worth five hundred thousand dollars."

"That's just the trouble with you, *Datto*. You think only of such cheap trash as rice and bullocks and potatoes. Forget that stuff and go after the big game. Now, these Catholic churches over in Mindanao have gold candlesticks and gold cups they call chalices, and the *padres* have got all kinds of gold money and precious stones. What we want to do is to rig up some good, strong double outriggers that will stand a trip from here to the coast of Mindanao, go over in small parties and relieve these church gentlemen of their wealth. They took it from the poor devils over there, and it's past time that somebody took it from them.

"And another thing, *Datto*. Any of these filibusters who'll be willing to run guns in here to us won't be willing to accept Spanish money or gold candlesticks. Either one would create suspicion against them. But convert everything into jewels—diamonds, rubies, pearls and the like—and they'll take those fast enough."

The *datto* had fallen in readily enough with both ideas. The outriggers were built, and the business of robbing churches and almost everything else was promptly begun. The results were highly pleasing to Crawson and Datto Parang but deeply distressing to numerous *padres*. The hard part, however, for Crawson, had been to keep Parang from buying guns in small quantities and thus preventing the accumulation from reaching the intended amount.

But finally he convinced the *datto* that it was safer to take one big chance of landing all the guns and ammunition at one time than to risk a number of small shipments. Thus the wealth now in hand had reached the five-hundred-thousand-dollar mark. There was no excuse for further delay. In fact, Crawson did not wish to delay any longer. The time had come to gather the fruit of his labor and his planning.

The little box had been brought out on this particular occasion to put into it more gems—the result of the last raid. Crawson drew from his pocket a small leather bag and poured its contents into the box. Parang closed and locked it, rose and took it into an adjoining room—his own sleeping-apartment.

Crawson wished that he knew the exact hiding-place for the box, but several subtle attempts to find out had failed.

When the *datto* returned, Crawson looked at his watch, pleaded fatigue and said he wished to retire for the night.

As a rule Crawson chose to sleep in his tent even when at headquarters. However, there was always a sleeping-apartment ready for him in the *datto's casa*, and tonight he said that he preferred a soft bed. So the *datto* called a slave, who lighted a large brass lamp and stood waiting to lead the way to Crawson's apartment.

The white man rose and started to follow the servant; then he stopped suddenly as if he had just thought of something.

"Ah," he said, "I must not forget my little courtesy."

He opened his cigaret case and studied its contents closely for a moment. Then he carefully selected a cigaret, placed it between the *datto's* lips and held out a lighted match. This was a custom which Crawson had established early in his associations with Datto Parang.

"It is a token of my loyalty," he told the *datto* on that first occasion.

The Mohammedan had been much flattered, and since that time they had never parted until the little ceremony was performed.

When he reached his room, Crawson went to bed but not to sleep. He did not want to sleep. Besides, his nerves were taut, and he fought continually to suppress excitement. Finally he lit a cigaret. It was a native production, and he threw it away in disgust, found a brown paper and some American tobacco and rolled a smoke. Then he settled back and in the pages of a six-months-old magazine tried to forget the passing of time. Nevertheless, he looked at his watch often, and at last the hands pointed to one o'clock. He judged that the time for his work had arrived.

He arose, dressed in an outfit of native clothes instead of his uniform and buckled about his waist a belt to which hung two large revolvers and one small kris. The belt contained one hundred cartridges. Crawson made his way without a sound back to the big room and with his left hand gently tried the door to Parang's bedroom while his right hand gripped the hilt of the small kris. He was not sure that Parang was asleep, and, in case he was discovered, a pistol-shot was out of the question.

Crawson found that the door was fastened on the inside. He waited breathlessly, his

ears strained for a sound. He could hear his watch tick off the seconds. A minute passed; no sound came. Then he carefully stuck the kris through the split-wattled door just below the wooden latch which fastened it on the inside. Next he pressed down on the handle of the kris, thus lifting the latch with the blade. The door opened readily, and Crawson stepped in.

A lamp was still burning. Parang was stretched on his bed crosswise, dead for the time being, his clothes still on. Crawson's cigaret had fulfilled its purpose. Another detail of his plan had worked out as calculated. This was encouragement.

The next step was to find the teak-wood box. He looked about the room. The box was not in sight. The walls of the house were split-wattled bamboo and thatched on the outside; there was no chance of its being hidden there. A thorough investigation of the furniture revealed nothing, and Crawson grew anxious. That the treasure was somewhere in the room, he was positive, for more than once he had seen Parang carry it there. And he knew that the *datto* was too well acquainted with Moro nature to have intrusted the box to any one.

Still, apparently, his search had already eliminated every possible hiding-place. No; there was one other. Happy thought. Why had it taken so long to come?

On his hands and knees Crawson began going over the floor. At last he moved the foot-mat beside Parang's bed, and there his search ended. A square panel had been cut out of the floor and a sort of trap-door made. Crawson raised the door, lifted out the box and started to leave the room. Then he thought of the six keys. He found them in the pocket of Parang's tunic.

OUTSIDE of the *casa* Crawson walked to a small, shabby tent and rapped on the closed flap. A few seconds passed, and then two husky Moros emerged from the tent and saluted in soldier fashion, their bare, bronze shoulders glistening under the full moon. These were the white man's personal servants.

"Chow," ordered Crawson. "Enough for two days."

The two servants were accustomed to sudden trips started in the middle of the night. They were used to the demand for chow and were always prepared to produce it quickly. Silently the two disappeared and in a few minutes returned with food for a two days' journey.

"To the boats *pronto*," Crawson ordered and fell in behind them.

At the beach Crawson pointed to a large outrigger. The Moros clambered aboard and took their places at the oars. The white man followed, and, as he seated himself in the stern of the boat, he saw one of the Moros make a slight gesture toward the box. Also, he noted that the two were whispering furtively to each other. He wondered if some rumor of the box and its treasure had reached them. It was possible. Yes, even probable. Secrets were hard to keep. At any rate, it was plain that his servants were suspicious, and Crawson decided that the sooner he asserted himself the better. He whipped out one of his revolvers and said curtly:

"I'm leaving this —— country of yours, and you two may as well know it now as any time. Shove off, and the first one that makes a sound is meat for the sharks."

For half an hour the men rowed vigorously under the stimulus of the white man's gun. Then he ordered a halt and called one of them over to him.

"Take off that bolo," he said, "and throw it into the sea. Now, have you got any more knives stored away about you?"

"No, *señor*," answered the Moro.

"Turn your back," said Crawson, "and I'll soon find out."

When the man's back was turned, Crawson pressed the muzzle of his revolver against the brown neck just below the ear and with his left hand felt around the waistband of the fellow's breech-clout and brought out a wavey little double-edged kris.

"I thought so," said the white man and threw the thing overboard after its larger brother.

"Now, go back and take your place at the oar," he ordered.

When the first servant was seated, Crawson called the other one over and searched him also.

"Now," said Crawson, "if I turn my back for the fifth part of a second, you *hombres* won't be able to whiz a knife into me. And don't forget to put some muscle behind them oars. If you do, I might get careless with these six-shooters."

After that he settled back to guard the two men who were sending the boat northward with long, sweeping strokes.

It was a trip of about one hundred and ninety miles that Crawson was intending to make, and he figured that he could force the two Moros to row that distance in seventy-two hours. He had planned to run north from Tawi Tawi until he passed Zamboanga City, which is at the southern end of the Zamboanga Peninsula.

Then he proposed to change his course east and pick up the coast of Mindanao off San Ramon, which is about twenty miles north of Zamboanga City. Here he would land among the peaceable Subanos, where there were no Moros and where he was reasonably sure there would be no troops. He could not afford to meet any soldiers—or any white people at all, for that matter. He did not know just how much the authorities knew about his raids in Mindanao or just how badly he might be wanted.

After landing he intended to go into the jungle near San Ramon, tie the Moros hand and foot and hold them prisoners. There in the jungle he would remain until he could learn of some steamer that was sailing from Zamboanga to Australia. Then he would turn his prisoners loose at the last minute, slip down in the night and get aboard the ship. And the new life would begin.

It was a clear night. The moon silvered the smooth, green water, and the arms of the outrigger hissed as they skimmed lightly along the surface.

With his gun in his right hand and the tiller in his left, Crawson held his boat to the north. Far astern of him, low in the sky, hung the Southern Cross, symbolic of the tropics, of adventure. At his feet lay five hundred thousand dollars—not in humdrum, commonplace money but in clean, pulse-stirring jewels. The blood coursed hotly through his veins. He felt the thrill of lawlessness—of piracy. He had defied all conventions, all law. He had set aside all scruples and taken for himself what he wanted out of the wealth of the world. And now he rode, a very monarch on the broad sea, forcing by sheer power two human beings to do his absolute will. Thus in exhilaration of possession, Crawson coaxed and threatened and drove the Moros on to greater effort. He knew that daylight would bring discovery and that the land and the sea would then be searched in all directions.

The precious hours from 2:30—the time when Crawson left the beach—till daylight sped all too swiftly. When day dawned, the two Moros were extremely tired, and Crawson's direst threats, accompanied by an occasional blow, failed to speed up the swing of their oars. To make the prospect less rosy, black clouds were gathering in the heavens and the wind was steadily increasing. About eleven o'clock in the morning Crawson saw two outriggers rise on the crest of a long swell well astern of him. There were at least a dozen men in each of the boats. Crawson had expected to be pursued, but he hardly thought they would have overtaken him so soon. At first he was inclined to doubt that they were pursuers. But any question as to who they were was promptly settled by a puff of white smoke which rose from one of the oncoming boats and a Mauser bullet which came whining across the water.

Crawson knew that it was no miracle that the Moros should have picked up his course so easily. Had he gone in any other direction, they would have sighted him just as quickly. For these were only two of a dozen boats sent out in fan-shape formation so as to cover the entire surface for miles around. The white man now prayed for the storm which he had so recently dreaded; it would at least put an end to the firing and perhaps give him a chance to elude the Moros.

The pursuers were pulling now with all their might, and with the strength of their many oars they were gaining fast. It seemed but a question of time until the erstwhile general would be overhauled and taken prisoner or else shot by his own soldiers. Crawson realized that he must do something—that in some way he must drive the two men in his own boat on to greater effort. He fired two shots in quick succession into the gunwales of the boat, one shot at the elbow of each of the Moros.

"Pull!" he shouted. "Pull! Or the next will lodge in your hides."

THE terror of the shots and the fierceness of Crawson's voice sent fear to their hearts; they forgot their fatigue, leaned far forward and then bent their oars with long backward sweeps. The boat shot out with doubled speed, and

the pursuers ceased to gain for a short time. But the exertion that Crawson's men had been driven to was short-lived; it was beyond their powers to keep it up.

In the meantime the waves were rapidly rising, for the wind, which had been blowing briskly from the northwest, suddenly shifted to the southwest with increased force. And now, instead of being compelled to pull partly against the wind, Crawson had both wind and water at his back driving him along his proper course faster than twenty oars could have done. But the same wind which drove his boat up the watery mountains and down across the seething valleys did the same for his pursuers. Nevertheless, Crawson welcomed the storm, which by now had turned the sky to a black shroud and the sea to a roaring, tearing monster.

By this time the two oarsmen had let their oars go and turned all their attention to the business of staying in the boat. And the little box was bouncing around in a way that was alarming. Crawson sheathed his revolver—there was no danger from his servants just then—and knelt astride the tiller, thus holding the boat on its course. Then he felt under the seat and found a short coil of rope. This he ran through the iron handles of the box and bound it to his shoulders.

Often now, as the frail craft scurried up the green wall of some gigantic billow, Crawson felt sure that it would pitch backward, bottom up, and be crushed by the great rolling mass of water immediately behind. Still the boat continued to climb up the sheer, green banks, its arms outspread like some monstrous spider, and Crawson would lean to the bottom lest he fall out backward.

Then, when the little shell would shoot over a curving ridge and cling there for a breathless second, Crawson was transported to raptures. In those few brief moments he would live ages at the pinnacle of life. And yet again, as the stinging salt spray whipped his face and the boat raced down at a speed which no engine could propel and the combing crests of the waves lapped out at him like hungry tongues, Crawson shouted in joy and defiance at the wild, whirling elements about him. But through it all he never forgot to use his tiller. With that he kept the stern of his boat to the wind—kept it from turning broadside and being swamped. It was a glorious battle, the pigmy man outwitting and overriding limitless power.

So filled was Crawson's mind with sensations that he had forgotten he was not alone until reminded by the sight of his two servants diving overboard. He realized that only some imminent danger could have driven them to leave the boat and brave such a boiling tumult. So he began scanning the horizon as closely as possible for an explanation of this sudden rashness.

First he eyed the boat up and down for a leak, but there was none. There was no water in the bottom to speak of—merely what had splashed aboard in the form of spray; the little craft was riding the waves buoyantly. At that instant the boat was on the crest of a towering billow, and Crawson was in a position to see much of the watery space about him, but the two servants were not in sight. Doubtless they had been carried down.

From the elevation of its position the little craft dived to the seemingly bottomless depth of a watery chasm. Then on the crest of the next wave Crawson learned why his oarsmen had chosen to go overboard. Scarcely had he seen it when his boat, rushing down the opposite side of the great wave with a scud-driving speed, crashed upon the reef and shattered to splinters. The Moros had feared this more than the raging water.

There was a swirl of water about Crawson's ears, an impression of tangled rafts of kindling wood, and then he found himself clinging to the reef, although the sharp coral cut his hands terribly. Instinctively, half-consciously, he freed one hand and reached up to his shoulder. The box was still there, intact.

Taking conditions as they were, the thing of most and immediate importance was to find some sort of shelter from the tremendous weight of onrushing water. Unless he did this, Crawson knew that he would soon be beaten insensible. He dragged himself up and crawled slowly over the reef, holding grimly with hands and feet to the irregular surface to brace his body against the ever-surging water. Thus he worked his way slowly and painfully to the western edge of the reef. Once there, he crawled down the rough side and found a ledge that afforded him a foothold. The ledge was

several feet below the surface. And, standing on this with more than half of his body under water and clinging to the edge of the reef with both hands, he was partially protected from the storm-driven water which broke and spent most of its force on the opposite side.

Crawson remained clinging here for what seemed to him an unendurable length of time. His shoulders ached from the weight of the box, which had become to him not a thing of pounds but of tons. His fingers were cramped and bleeding from holding to the ledge, and he felt that he had been holding on there since the first ray of the first dawn. But in reality it was less than an hour, for the storm broke quickly, as they so often do in tropical waters. The clouds melted, and the sun shone forth, dazzling, searing.

As soon as the commotion of the water began to subside, Crawson left his perch on the ledge and drew himself up to the surface of the reef. The seas were still running high, but the force was no longer behind them. Crawson was able to stand up and survey his surroundings.

ALMOST the first thing he saw was a low, flat speck of land. It was a mere dot on the face of the ocean. He could see across it. There were no inhabitants, no growth—just a bare, bald sand-dune with a rocky formation at one end, completely surrounded by a coral reef. Yet to Crawson it was a paradise, an oasis in the desert. He judged the island to be about a mile from the reef, and even in his present condition he felt equal to a swim of that distance.

The seas were fast getting down to normal. Crawson scanned the horizon in search of the Moros. They were not to be seen. The white man was glad for this. He might be able to swim a mile, but he was in no shape for an encounter with a gang of Moros. Moreover, he had no weapon except his two hands with which to defend himself. When his boat had been wrecked, his belt was torn off in some way, and with it went his dagger, his revolvers and ammunition.

Crawson sat down and took off his shoes and trousers, tied the shoes together and swung them over his neck, stuffed the trousers in between his back and the jewel box, slipped into the water and struck out for the island with a long, steady stroke that he knew he would be able to maintain.

As soon as he reached the island, which he judged to be about five miles in circumference, Crawson began going over it in the hope of finding fresh water. But, much to his dismay, there was not a drop to be found. But he did come upon numerous birds. Some of the more timid ones flew a little away at his approach, but most of them merely waddled to one side as he came near. He recognized them for gunnies and terns, and by the great quantities of eggs strewn on the sand he knew they were there for the purpose of breeding. This, then, solved the problem of food. However, Crawson's thirst was greater than his hunger just then; so he determined to look again for water before trying the eggs.

While pursuing his search for water, Crawson discovered the hull of an old wreck, a small sailing craft. It was piled on the beach and half buried in the sand, indicating that it had been wrecked years before. He ripped an oaken plank from the side of the old hull, broke it at a convenient length, went back about two hundred yards from the beach and began to dig. He had expected that he would have to try in many places, but to his surprize water began to bubble up through the sand when he had dug down less than five feet.

Crawson cupped his hands and tasted it. It was cool and fresh—not the slightest tinge of salt. He thought it a miracle that he had struck water at the first place he tried. Later he was to learn that he could strike water anywhere on the island as soon as he dug down to the level of the ocean's surface. It was merely the ocean water that seeped through the sand and was filtered in the process.

When Crawson had slaked his thirst at the little well of his own making, his incentive for further exertion was removed. For the present, at least, his hunger was forgotten in the crying need of his body—his entire body from molecule to muscle—for relaxation, rest.

The ancient schooner had come on to the beach at the north side of the island with its nose pointing southward. Therefore, as the time was afternoon, the western side of it offered a small space of shade. Crawson stretched out in the coolness of this spot and gave himself up to slumber—that

slumber which is absolute oblivion—the oblivion that comes to the utterly exhausted.

Crawson was aroused some hours later by the lapping of cool water about his body. The waves had actually reached the height of his neck. It was high tide. He crawled out of the thin sheet of rising and receding water and stood up, once more fresh, invigorated, hungry, ready for the eggs.

He scooped out a slight depression in the sand, placed in it half a dozen eggs and covered them with more sand. Then he ripped a plank from the old wreck and with a heavy chunk of coral broke it into fine splinters and piled them over the eggs ready to fire. But, when he drew from his pocket a supposedly waterproof match-box, he found that his matches were totally dissolved by water. However, this did not daunt Crawson, nor did he mean that he would eat his eggs raw. He looked around for a while and found some dry grass, a few scrawny turfs of which grew on the island. He took some of the grass between his hands and ground it into fine chaff. Then over the chaff he held two stones and struck them together. A spark fell; the chaff ignited. This he set to the splinters, and soon the eggs were roasted.

When Crawson finished eating, it was about an hour before sunset, and the day was exceptionally clear. Looking off to the east, in the hazy distance he could distinguish the dim shape of a great mountain. This, he knew, was on the Island of Jolo; no other island so near lifted its peak to that height. And by his proximity to Jolo Crawson knew that he was marooned on one of the many nameless, uncharted islands that are a part of the Sulu Archipelago.

To the west of him he could see another island, which was, apparently, about five miles away. This island was larger and had a much greater elevation than the one on which he was located. Also, it appeared to have a considerable growth of coco-palms. These trees interested Crawson a great deal. If he could only get to the other island, he would find some way of making these tall, straight spires into a raft. He knew that ships never came into that labyrinth of coral reefs; so his one hope of getting to the mainland was a raft of some sort.

At first Crawson had thought to construct a raft out of timber from the old wreck, but half an hour's consideration of this project proved it impractical. Any raft that he could rig out with boards and cross-beams would be too light and too frail for a hundred-mile sea voyage. On the other hand, a raft of heavy logs would not be so easily capsized.

As Crawson sat thinking these things over, twilight effaced the gold of the sunset; a myriad stars dotted the sky; cold, pale moonbeams fell like shattered lances on the dark bosom of the ocean; a mating bird called sleepily to its loved one, and the sound blended and harmonized with the dull boom of the waves on the distant reef. Then at last the castaway, lulled by the balmy, salt air, threw aside his problems and fell asleep.

Crawson spent the next morning working the roof off the galley of the old hull. He had nothing but a chunk of coral and a length of cross-beam to work with, and it was a tedious job. But he finally pried the thing off in good condition. It made a flimsy raft, one that he would never dare the sea with, but he thought he could get to the other island on it. However, he decided not to make the trip for several days to come. If there were any Moros—his late pursuers—marooned over there, they would probably rig up a raft and either start for Tawi Tawi or come looking for him in the next day or two.

IT WAS noon when Crawson completed his task with the galley roof, and he was again hungry. He roasted more eggs and was much annoyed to find, upon peeling the shells off, that two of them were exceedingly strong and that one had in it a half-hatched bird. He was already beginning to feel the want of variety in food, and the sight of a half-hatched bird in his dinner did not increase his relish for a straight egg diet. Crawson determined that it should not happen again. He found a piece of board, the one he had used to dig the well, and with it drew a large circle in the sand and moved every egg out of the circle. He knew then that the eggs he would find in this circle for the next few days would be fresh.

Three days passed. No Moros showed, and Crawson decided that he would risk a trip to the other island. He buried his box of jewels deep under the lee of the old hull. If the Moros were on the other island, he had no intention of carrying the treasure

over to them. Then, when the tide came in and washed away all traces of his digging, he rolled his clothes into a small bundle, made them secure on the raft, took a board of convenient length and rowed out to a gap in the reef, worked his raft through and started on his perilous voyage.

He had not gone far before he noticed a single sharp fin about two inches above the water. Crawson did not need to look to know what was beneath the fin; it was a long, gray cigar-shaped thing—a man-eater—slinking along with ghoulish stealth just across from the little raft. Crawson slapped the water loudly with the flat of his paddle, and for a few minutes the fin disappeared. But soon it was back again, slinking along even closer than before. And so the man rowed on, and so the silent, gray ghoul dogged his course. That the shark might attack Crawson on his flimsy raft was not altogether improbable, and, if it did, the result was certain—the raft upset, a flash of red jaws, of gleaming teeth and—the end. But this ever present possibility did not greatly worry Crawson; rather, it made the situation interesting—added zest to existence.

After about three hours the raft crossed a slightly submerged reef, and the shark disappeared. A little more and Crawson landed. A few minutes proved that there were no Moros on the island. It was not a sand formation like the island he had just left, but one of those humps of earth that have been pushed up above water surface by some subterranean upheaval. Having been raised from the bed of the ocean, the island was fertile and its foliage rank. There were coconuts and bananas and nipa in abundance. Also, Crawson found a spring of clear, fresh water bubbling through a crevice in the side of a rock-walled cliff. After allowing himself the luxury of half a dozen bananas and the milk from two half-grown coconuts, he set about the work of constructing a raft.

First he gathered nipa and plaited it into three-ply strands of about forty feet each. These he tied from tree to tree, stretching them tight and leaving them to dry. Bundle after bundle he plaited, and strand after strand he stretched among the trees, till he had more than twelve hundred feet of nipa rope. This work occupied the best part of ten days, and, when it was finished, his next item was logs.

Crawson had no tool to cut down and trim trees; so he searched out fallen logs—not rotten ones, but sound ones blown down by typhoons. Naturally, these logs were of various lengths, and, to get them all of one length, he rolled and dragged them together, side by side, the butt ends even. Then he brought dry grass and branches and built a fire across the logs where it would burn them off evenly and at a proper length. Then, laying them in two tiers, crosswise, and using the grass rope for lashing, he soon completed a much-roped and fairly durable raft.

Out of some small boughs and vines Crawson constructed a sort of bin at the front end of the raft, and this he filled with coconuts, the milk of which would take the place of water on the voyage. Building the raft had taken altogether fifteen days, and during that time Crawson had eaten nothing but coconuts and bananas. So he was glad to set out for the sand island again, where he could eat eggs.

Crawson started about ten o'clock in the morning, but his raft was heavy, broad-ended and consequently hard to row. He was all day covering the five or six miles between the islands.

Shortly before sundown he made his raft fast to the old wreck and immediately began digging to see whether his treasure was still safe. He had spent some anxious nights about that, but now he found it just as he had left it. So he roasted himself a meal of eggs and then placed several dozen more under a large fire and left them to roast during the night. These were for the voyage.

THE next morning Crawson started on his voyage to the small coast town of San Ramon. For eight days Crawson rowed diligently, stopping to snatch a few hours of sleep only when nature became too insistent to be denied. The end of the eighth day found him in a bad way, indeed. For three days he had not seen sun, moon or stars. He had completely lost all idea of direction. Day and night, hour and minute, he dwelt on the probability of his location. Where was he? Was he going toward San Ramon or out to sea? These questions reiterated themselves again and again. They preyed on his nerves. Panic seized him. His muscles were stiff and sore from rowing and his

hands blistered. His mind was on the verge of dissolution. Then, at last, nature came to his relief, and Crawson slept.

There was a whistle, shrill, metallic. It seemed faintly to pierce dim, invisible walls wherein Crawson was confined. The whistle died out, but the walls had been pierced. There came the clang of bells. Crawson had heard bells like that before. Where? Oh, yes, to be sure—in the engine-room on a ship. That's where he had heard those bells. They were signals to the engineer.

The invisible walls around Crawson were shattered. He now heard clearly. A voice of authority was giving commands. But where was he, Crawson? Where had he come from? How had he come to be here so close to a ship and yet not on the ship? He opened his eyes. A long blade of light slanted down on him and revealed his raft of logs, coconuts piled at one end and water all about. Ah, yes, he knew then. He had been lost at sea on a raft. He had fallen asleep, and this was a ship come to rescue him. At last he would get off of the raft and feel the comfort and certainty of knowing where he was.

The life-boat was alongside of his raft. Crawson's jewel box, as usual, was roped to his shoulders. He scrambled to his hands and knees and crawled stiffly to the edge of the raft. He was weak, exhausted. The sailors helped him gently into their boat and then aboard the ship.

Hours later Crawson awoke in a bunk in the forecastle. He moved, and there was a clank of chains. His wrists and his ankles were in irons. Crawson held up his manacled hands and demanded of the sailor across from him:

"What the —— does this mean?"

"It means that the skipper's had a look into that little teak-wood box," responded the sailor, "and he's decided that you're Crawson, the fellow who's been leadin' Moros and lootin' down around Zamboanga."

"What right has this skipper got to be nosing into my belongings?" snarled Crawson.

"Say, son," grinned the other. "You're aboard of a United States revenue cutter."

Crawson turned his back to the sailor. There was nothing more to be said.

DAY-DREAMS

BY E. C. LINCOLN

'LONG about this time of year, when the city's hot,
Feller seems to lose his head—cusses quite a lot.

'Tain't as if he'd never lived out where things are big—
Seven years at ridin' range sometimes gives a dig!

Down the coulée, leathers squeakin',
N-Bar's ridin', work all through.
All of God's free air above 'em,
Sunset crimsonin' before 'em,
Purple sagebrush hills about 'em—
Gosh! I'd like to be there, too!

Cook, he yells, "Come on 'n' git it,"
Sees 'em comin' up the crick.
Twistin' dust cloud rollin' homeward,
Twenty ponies tearin' homeward,
All the old gang racin' homeward—
Gee, but clerkin' makes me sick!

Huh? What's that about a shipment? Fourteen stoves to J. McKirk?
Well, s'long, you N-bar fellers; me, I've got to go to work.

Howling Jim's Pal

BY HAPSBURG LIEBE

Author of "Big Balsam Joe," "Peep-Eye," etc.

FOR three hours the snow had been falling steadily. The white blanket that covered Little Brother Mountain and Big Brother Mountain—and the broad and thickly wooded valley that lay between them—was five inches deep. In the center of the valley Big Brother Creek flowed merrily, passing the Morgan-Haley Lumber Company's logging outfit and pouring its crystal waters into Laurel River some four miles below.

Night had come. Supper was over at the Morgan-Haley camp, and the majority of the timberjacks had deserted the big and rough boarding-house for the commissary's glowing cast-iron stove. These were stalwart and sunburned fellows, all mountaineers and all dressed alike in laced boots and broad hats, blue flannel shirts and clay-colored corduroys.

Gideon Ashford, a big logger whose beard was so black that his freshly-shaven face had a bluish look, had just begun a harangue, setting forth in his uncouth way the extraordinary beauty of one Miss Nancy Kirkland, when an interrupting voice came from the other side of the red-hot stove.

"Shet up!" with an icy snap. "When ye ain't got nothin' to say, say it!"

"Humph!" grunted the impudent Ashford. He was the bully and smart Aleck of the camp. "Is that you, 'Lonesome'? Why, I thought ye was asleep. It's got to be that ye're real sassy when 'Howlin' Jim' ain't around to keep ye quiet. Fust thing ye know, ye'll have some trouble, Lonesome, a-tellin' grown folks to shet up thataway!"

His words carried a bite. The man called "Lonesome" sat on a soap box with his legs crossed and with his forearms resting on his upper knee. He was a tall and rangey young man, as hard as hickory and as lithe as a panther and remarkably taciturn at times—which, of course, had bred for him his nickname. For six months he had been with the Morgan-Haley crew, and still nobody seemed to know anything about him save Howling Jim Baskin—unless it was old Nathan Kirkland's daughter, Nancy.

Howling Jim—he had a voice that would have made a fog-horn blush, and he used it at every decent opportunity—had come to the camp on Big Brother Creek with Lonesome Bentley. He was at least thirty-five, and ten years older than Bentley. But theirs had been a wonderfully tight friendship for all of that.

Lonesome did not favor Ashford with a reply. A few of the onlooking timberjacks snickered, because they didn't know what else to do. Ashford laughed outright at that which he was pleased to think of as the other's discomfiture. Just then there came to the ears of those in the commissary a snatch of a foolish old song in the ringing voice of Howling Jim, who was leaving the boarding-house for the big stove.

"I'm a-goin' to live, anyhow, till I die—
Anyhow, anyhow, till I die!"

"Howlin's a-comin'," grinned Ashford. "I reckon ye'll behave yerself now, Lonesome."

Bentley stuck fast to his motto, "When ye ain't got nothin' to say, say it," and was

silent. As Baskin stepped into the commissary doorway, he shook the snow from his hat, his broad shoulders and his boots.

"Hi, men! Good evenin' to ye! Anybody seed anything o' Lonesome?" he shot all in one breath at the crowd by the stove.

"Here," the bully answered in tones colored with ridicule, pointing.

Baskin closed the door behind him, walked smilingly over and halted beside his pal. Something was wrong, he saw at once. Then he caught sight of the still leering face of the bully, and he understood. He stepped toward Ashford, folded his arms across his chest and looked Ashford straight in the eye.

"All right, Gid," he said narrowly; "keep it up. You'll git yores, all right, ef ye'll jest keep it up. It won't be me that hands it to ye, neither; it'll be Lonesome hisself. He shore carries a su'prize package in each paw, and he'll lay a wallopin' on ye that four hosses cain't pull off!"

Gideon Ashford laughed to save his face, so to speak. As yet he had not fought either Howling Jim or Bentley; they were to him unknown quantities. He found an empty box close to Lonesome and sat down. Another minute and the commissary door opened again. This time a slender and nicely-figured girl of not much more than twenty came in. Snow particles glistened like diamond chips on her pale-blue home-knit and tasseled headgear and on her cheap but warm imitation Paisley shawl. Her cheeks were as rosy as red apples from the cold air and good health, and her long brown eyes were full of laughter twinkles.

Smiling for no reason whatever, she walked across to the counter. She paid not the slightest notice to the score of loggers, who had fallen as still as death at the sight of her and who now watched her as if she were the very last woman in the world. Those big, rugged men adored Nancy Kirkland.

"My dad ain't got any tobaccy," she drawled softly to Billy Allison, the clerk, a pale youth who hailed from the lowland.

Allison gave her a tin of smoking tobacco. She put a little silver coin on the counter and turned for the door.

Lonesome Bentley's gaze had been fastened sternly and defiantly upon Gideon Ashford's dark countenance from the moment of the girl's coming. Ashford now put his hands on his knees and was about to go to his feet. Bentley tapped him sharply on the arm.

"Set still," said Lonesome.

"But——"

"Set still!" Lonesome snapped.

Ashford stared in amazement at having his hand thus called. Then his face clouded.

"I got as good a right to go home with her as you have."

"No, you ain't!" Bentley's low, steely voice cut him off. "You ain't fit!"

The girl was gone. Ashford rose, and his huge and hairy hands curled up into fists. Bentley slipped to his feet without any apparent effort.

"You ain't fit," he reiterated. "Any man what lies and steals and drinks and gambles ain't fit to go with any decent woman anywhere. I've shore said it. Ef you want to fight me about it, go to it. I've took all o' yore fun-makin' and mouthin' I'll ever take. Ef you want to start somethin' wi' me, start it right now; I'm ready and a-waitin'."

Lonesome's face was pale save for a tiny pink spot under the sunburn of either cheek. His eyes fairly sparkled. He held himself as tense as a coiled steel spring. The bully turned red and glanced with a sickly grin toward the men who watched and waited at Bentley's elbows. Ashford knew that he had to fight or else let the outfit take it for granted that he was afraid. And that steel spring of a man who stood before him dared him to so much as lift a finger!

For a moment there was charged silence. It was broken by a silly little guffaw from the lowland youth who held forth as commissary clerk, and with that all the loggers except the two belligerents themselves joined in a roar of derisive laughter. Gid Ashford, the fallen false god, became still redder. He slumped back to his box, took paper and tobacco from his pocket and nervously began to roll for himself a cigaret.

Now that the thing was over, Howling Jim Baskin turned and placed a hand proudly on his pal's shoulder. To the surprize of everybody, Lonesome Bentley threw Howling Jim's hand off angrily.

"Never mind," said Lonesome.

Baskin stared, looked hurt, stepped slowly to the counter and leaned against it rather heavily. Bentley gave the crestfallen erstwhile bully a look of contempt

and went alone toward the boarding-house.

Not long afterward the commissary crowd began to thin out. At closing time only Ashford and Billy Allison, the clerk, were there. And Ashford watched young Allison keenly as he took the day's gleanings from the money-drawer and placed them in the small iron safe.

The Morgan-Haley Company's commissary banked but once each month, and these deposits ran anywhere from four to eight hundred dollars.

WHEN Lonesome Bentley went toward the boarding-house, Howling Jim followed him. Bentley did not even look around until he had reached the up-stairs sleeping-quarters of the crew, in which a big hanging oil lamp burned dimly. He gave Baskin a glance that was part scowl, undressed without a word to his former great crony and crept silently under his blankets. Baskin followed suit, and for five minutes the two big man lay so still there in their narrow beds, within six feet of each other, that they seemed to be hardly breathing.

Then Howling Jim put the soft pedal on his fog-horn voice and spoke.

"Lonesome!"

No answer.

"Lonesome," Baskin pursued, "what is it that's come between you and me?"

"Never mind," Bentley said sharply.

And not another word could Howling Jim get out of him that night.

Howling Jim found slumber forsaking him. As for Lonesome, neither did he go to sleep readily. His thoughts wouldn't let him sleep. Those thoughts would have been highly enlightening to Baskin if only he could have read them!

A week before Lonesome Bentley and old Nathan Kirkland's daughter, who lived with her parents in a big hewn-log cabin a mile down Big Brother Creek, had quarreled bitterly—so bitterly, in fact, that Nancy had snapped off her engagement to Bentley as if it had been of no more importance than a pie-crust! Lonesome didn't know what they had quarreled about and Nancy didn't remember. That is how it goes when young human beings set other young human beings up on pedestals as models of perfection to worship them. The fault was humanity's, rather than either Nancy Kirkland's or Lonesome Bentley's individually, no doubt. And then——

Four days after the misunderstanding, on a bright Sunday afternoon, Bentley had decided that he would try to bridge the abyss that yawned between him and his sweetheart by going to her and confessing that he had been a fool. He had started for her home, and by the merest chance he had come upon a scene that distressed him sorely. Nancy and Howling Jim were sitting together under a big poplar; Baskin was holding her hand in his, and she was smiling at him in her very best way! Then Lonesome Bentley had stolen back to the camp with red-hot iron in his soul.

It seemed doubly hard to bear, following, as it did, on the heels of news to the effect that the Morgan-Haley Company looked upon him—Lonesome Bentley, as the very best logger in the outfit. Bentley, for all of his taciturnity, was an ambitious young man.

THOUGH they had lost some sleep, Bentley and Baskin sprang from their beds at the first ringing blow on the railroad iron triangle-gong which hung just outside the kitchen door. Neither had anything to say. Lonesome was the first to get his clothing on. He snatched up his hat and hastened down to the dimly-lighted back porch to bathe his face and his hands.

He had no more than finished his washing when Howling Jim addressed him from the open doorway behind him:

"The super wants to see ye, Lonesome. In his office. Said for me to tell ye. By grab! That's good luck, Lonesome!"

It was a fine bid for talk; however, Lonesome failed to nibble. Without a single word Bentley threw the icy-cold towel to its peg on the wall and went toward Superintendent Bradshaw's little office on the first floor. He wondered just what the good luck was. A raise in wages, maybe.

The high light of the Morgan-Haley camp was a big and bronzed elderly man, and he now sat before a small sheet-iron stove, which was glowing hot.

"Sit down, Bentley," he said, pointing toward a cheap straight-back. Lonesome dropped into the chair, and Bradshaw went on: "Nobody knows loggin' better than you know it, Bentley, and I've recommended you for the super's job here. I'm

leavin' in just fifteen more days. What do you think of it? Can you hold it?"

"I can read and write and figger enough to keep the time-sheets," Lonesome said softly, more to himself than to Bradshaw, perhaps. "Shore, I can hold it. I'm much obliged to ye, Brad!"

Honest appreciation beamed from his eyes. To be the superintendent of a logging outfit, that was his fondest dream but one—and that one concerned Nancy Kirkland, himself and a preacher! He had worked hard and for years in the attempt to fit himself for a superintendent's place.

Bradshaw was about to speak again when the door banged open to admit a miniature hurricane of cold air and the youthful figure of Billy Allison, the commissary clerk. Allison snapped the door shut behind him and turned nervously to the two men.

"The commissary's front door was broken open last night, Brad," he announced in a low and somewhat shaky voice. "Whoever it was used a peavy spike which was left lying in the snow by the step. But the safe is all right, and I didn't notice that anything was gone."

Bradshaw rose, and so did Bentley. Then the superintendent beckoned to the logger, and the three of them went toward the company's general store. Dawn was just spreading its great, rose-colored fan upward from the crest of Little Brother Mountain; the new day promised to be clear and bright.

Allison had already lighted the great oil lamp that hung in the center of the big, long room, and he and the other two quickly looked over the stock. So far as they were able to see, nothing had been stolen. Bradshaw walked back to the safe, which stood under the rear end of the counter; it was tightly locked.

"Sure this is all right, Billy?" he asked.

"I haven't looked inside," frowned young Allison.

He hastened to the safe, knelt before it and within another minute swung open the iron door. Then he shot to his feet.

"It's all gone—six hundred dollars!" he exclaimed.

He had spoken correctly. The six hundred dollars in cash was not there. Bentley pressed forward and leaned over the counter.

"Funny how that happened," was his drawling, puzzled comment. "It must ha' been somebody that knowed the combination!"

Billy Allison flashed a quick look toward the hillman, as at an accuser. Another second and he was staring anxiously into the superintendent's bronzed face.

"Brad, do you think—" he began.

Bradshaw interrupted.

"The lad didn't do it, Lonesome," he said a trifle sharply. "And I didn't do it, and only us two and Stapleton Haley knows the combination. There's been a smooth job pulled off here, Lonesome. We'd better send to Jonesville for the sheriff as soon as possible. But first maybe we'd better see whether there's any footprints leadin' off from the commissary. Eh?"

Bentley nodded, and Allison said eagerly:

"Yes; the snow had stopped falling when I closed last night, and the robber couldn't have gone anywhere except to the boarding-house without his footprints giving him away."

It was now light enough for them to see even the track of a rabbit in the snow outside. They walked a wide circle in the clearing, encompassing both the commissary and the boarding-house without coming upon a single footprint that couldn't be easily accounted for. Which was conclusive proof that both the thief and the money were still in camp.

When they had come to the commissary's front doorway again, Bradshaw turned to Bentley with this:

"One of the loggin'-engines ought to have some fire in it from yesterday, Lonesome. Sneak over to the tracks and take one down to Jonesville and bring the sheriff. It's down-grade nearly all the way, and you can raise steam as you go. Hurry!"

Bentley ran to the tracks, leaped aboard one of the geared locomotives and loosed the brakes. The wheels began to turn.

The passing of an hour found him in the foot-hills with a fair head of steam coming on. Two hours after sunrise he was speaking hastily with Garrett Henry, the lanky and serious, blue-clad and broad-hatted Jonesville sheriff.

IT WAS not far from noontime when the thundering staccato of the small, geared engine's laboring exhaust reached the ears of those who waited at the Morgan-Haley camp on Big Brother

Creek. The crew had not gone to work in the woods that day. When at last the little locomotive came to a halt in the camp clearing, Garrett Henry and Bentley leaped to the snowy ground and went to meet Superintendent Bradshaw.

"Find out anything more?" growled the officer.

Bradshaw shook his head.

"But the thief is still here, and the money, too. You've got a chance to show us how smart you are, all right!"

Henry merely grunted. The trio walked on and entered the commissary, which was half filled with expectant timberjacks. An accommodating logger passed to the sheriff the peavy that had been used in breaking open the door. Henry looked it over, saw that it was only an ordinary implement of its kind and put it down. Then he and the superintendent and Bentley went back to the safe, where the officer asked questions soberly, nodded a great deal and made a superficial examination. Howling Jim Baskin had followed them; he idly dropped a friendly hand to Lonesome Bentley's arm, and Bentley threw it off as if it were a thing of unspeakable contamination!

"Somebody who knowed the combination," decided Henry.

"It was not," firmly replied Bradshaw.

He himself had vouched for the honesty of Billy Allison.

The sheriff began to strike matches that he might better see into dark corners about the safe. Suddenly he bent lower and picked up a small, square object that was mostly white. As he straightened to bring it into better light—Henry's eyes had never been so good as his courage—a muscular arm in corduroy shot over his shoulder and seized it, and, before the passing of another second, the man to whom that arm belonged was running like a race-horse for the doorway!

It was Howling Jim, who had, by chance, been standing directly behind the officer. Henry snatched his revolver from its holster and called upon Baskin to halt. Half a dozen loggers stepped out of the path of a possible bullet. But Howling Jim didn't stop; he drove through the doorway, turned sharply to his left and out of the sheriff's range of vision and made for the near-by woods.

Henry followed rapidly to the door-sill, and Lonesome Bentley was within a yard of him when he reached it. Then Garrett Henry leveled his revolver at the fleeing figure. Baskin was running unwisely in a straight line, his brown-clad body making a plain and almost stationary target against the dead white of the snow. But before Henry could fire, Bentley caught his right shoulder and pulled him backward.

"Not that!" growled Lonesome, ashen-faced and defiant. "You don't kill Jim Baskin as easy as that!"

When Henry recovered himself, Baskin was in the laurels and his escape assured. The officer now turned his attention to Bentley, and there was a queer smile about his lips.

"Pals, eh?"

"Mighty good pals—" began Lonesome, remembering Nancy Kirkland and breaking off short.

For the fractional part of a minute he looked away at nothing, and, when he again turned his eyes toward the Jonesville sheriff, he found himself staring straight into the muzzle of a Colt .45.

"It's my duty to arrest you," quietly said Garrett Henry, "as a pardner in this robbery."

Lonesome Bentley lived a long time in the moment that followed this announcement. In his mind's eye he saw himself and Nancy —when he had asked her—when she had agreed to marry him. He saw himself and Nancy when they had quarreled over—he didn't remember what. And he saw Howling Jim, his pal, holding the girl's hand while she smiled her best smile into his rugged face. All of it—his bright hopes of a superintendency, the robbery, the accusation and all the rest of it—somehow tangled him, muddled him, dazed him. It seemed unreal, like a bad dream. . . .

The sheriff was speaking again—

"I'll have to search you, Bentley."

Lonesome gave no sign that he had heard. As Henry began to go through the pockets of his prisoner, Nancy Kirkland walked smilingly into the commissary and turned toward Billy Allison, who now stood in his place behind the counter.

"I want some sug——"

That was as far as she ever got with it, for at that instant she caught sight of the sheriff and Lonesome Bentley. She went immediately toward them.

"What—what's that for?" she demanded in a small, thin voice.

Nobody answered. The officer went on with his slow and exceedingly careful search of Bentley's clothing. Lonesome looked toward her, smiled a tiny smile that seemed desperate rather than merry and turned his gaze aside. Gideon Ashford, who had been watching the entire proceedings with triumph written largely over his dark countenance, touched Nancy Kirkland's arm and whispered—

"I'll tell ye ef nobody else won't."

With several backward glances toward Bentley the girl went with Ashford to the snow-covered ground outside. There Ashford blew sparks from his home-made cigaret and bent forward with this:

"Lonesome was cunninger'n I thought he was," in low tones. "He was cunning enough to open the commissary safe and take out the six hundred dollars the' was in it and leave it locked up jest like it was afore! It's shore a joke on him—he went and brung the sheriff out and 'en got arrested hisself!"

"He never done the robbin'!" flared Nancy, her brown eyes wide and sparkling with resentment. "He wouldn't never do it!"

Ashford shrugged his ox-like shoulders.

"Forchunitly or onforchunitly, ye don't haf to take my word for it. Look here!"

Through the open door he had seen Garrett Henry unhook a safety-pin from the upper edge of one of Bentley's inside coat pockets and take out a sizeable roll of bank-notes! Ashford stepped hastily back across the door-sill, and Nancy Kirkland followed with a lump in her throat. With one eye still on his prisoner Henry counted the money through, after which he said to Bentley:

"Six hundred, I believe you told me. Here's two hundred and ten. You didn't quite get your share, did you, Lonesome?"

Bentley was still ashen-faced, still defiant. He straightened even a little more.

"You mean that me and Howlin' Jim——"

"I mean that you and Howlin' Jim went pardners in the deal," hazarded the sheriff. "Better confess, Lonesome. It'll go easier with you, you know. Now just how did you and Howlin' manage to get the money without workin' the combination?"

"Charmed it out," drawled Bentley in the keenest sarcasm. He brought his hands up to the lapels of his corduroy coat and with a forefinger rubbed his chin as if reflectively. "One of us stood on each side o' the safe. Howlin' would say, 'Keeno, Presto,' and I'd say, 'Presto, Keeno.' And purty soon the money jest tumbled right out."

Lonesome interrupted himself with a master play. He brought his two hands downward and in one lightning-like movement drove Garrett Henry's revolver fifteen feet out of his grip and seized the roll of two hundred and ten dollars in bank-notes. That money represented Bentley's savings for a year. Henry sprang to recover his weapon, and Lonesome sprang for the outside. As the sheriff ran toward the door with his revolver in his hand, a peavy came hurtling before his legs, tripping him, causing him to fall heavily. When he rose, Bentley was in the laurels.

Seeing that Lonesome, too, had escaped him, the fuming sheriff turned back and stopped squarely before Nancy Kirkland.

"You, too!" he exclaimed. "You throwed the peavy, eh?"

"I shore did," Nancy admitted. "It ain't any secret. What're ye a-goin' to do about it?"

Henry's countenance was threatening—and, considering that morning's run of luck for him, one may hardly blame him.

"I'll arrest you as a—a accomplice; that's what I'm a-goin' to do about it!" he said.

It was then that the camp rose and spoke as a single man.

"I'll be danged ef ye do!"

Henry faced the loggers—loggers who adored Nathan Kirkland's daughter.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"I'll be danged ef ye do!" the camp spoke yet again, and it came a little more determinedly than before.

FOR the first hundred yards after he had gained the snowy underbrush, Bentley's thoughts were occupied wholly with making good his escape. No man of his people had ever been to jail, and he wasn't going so long as he could avoid it. Then, seeing that he was in no immediate danger of capture—the average down-South sheriff knows the hopelessness of chasing a mountaineer in the laurels—Bentley began to wonder what the small white object was that Garrett Henry had found lying under the safe. Soon he decided that he would strike Baskin's trail in the snow, overtake

him and find out. Also, he would bring the little matter of Howling Jim's love-making to Nancy to a show-down.

Fifteen minutes more and he had come upon the footprints for which he had been searching. They led him up a bank of the creek for a mile and then turned to the left and were lost on bare ground under a great patch of hemlocks that stood so thickly that their interlaced branches had caught nearly all the snow that had fallen on them. Howling Jim had brought into effect a woodsman's trick here in order to halt possible pursuit, and Lonesome suspected it at once. Lonesome began to look for the answer, and soon his gaze rested upon a spot at which the bare ground ran within half a dozen yards of Big Brother Creek.

Bentley nodded understanding. Just as Baskin had done, he backed off, ran hard and leaped over the few yards of snowy ground, landing somewhere near the middle of the shallow stream.

He walked a mile up the stony little creek before he found Howling Jim's footprints leading out of it. The trail now took him high on the side of Little Brother Mountain and then across an outstanding spur and into a deep cove, and he was not more than half-way down the side of this cove when darkness closed in upon him. It was impossible, of course, for him to follow the string of footprints farther before daylight came again. Lonesome Bentley halted. He was chagrined but by no means beaten. He was cold now. His wet feet seemed frozen, and he stamped them on the ground to help the circulation in them.

It was still, very still, and Lonesome stood and listened. A few minutes later he heard faintly, coming from somewhere in the bottom of the dark cove below him, a snatch of the foolish old song that Howling Jim was so fond of singing in a sort of abandon—

"I'm a-goin' to live, anyhow, till I die!"

Bentley stole softly onward, downward, heading for a tiny point of flame that had suddenly come to life in the woods below.

Howling Jim Baskin sat before a brushwood fire that he had just made at the base of an overhanging cliff. The fire made dancing and grotesque shadows there in the wild forest. Baskin held his wet feet in his wet boots near the flames. The muffled sound of a twig being broken in the snow caused him to look around quickly.

Lonesome Bentley, seeming doubly stalwart and doubly serious in the flickering firelight, walked slowly up and stood looking straight into the upturned and smiling face of his pal. He had suffered an almost overpowering wave of sudden, insensate anger. It was his intention to denounce Howling Jim as a black traitor to all friendship. But in a second's time there flashed on the palimpsest of his brain scenes from the good old days that he and Baskin had spent together, scenes that pictured little kindnesses, confidences, almost tendernesses.

So, when Lonesome finally spoke, he said only this—

"My feet's about froze, Howlin'."

"Shore," grinned Baskin. "Mine was too, by grab! Set down and warm 'em. Have any trouble a-trackin' me, Lonesome?" His voice was full of gladness.

"Not much," Bentley answered. He went on, "Do ye reckon Garrett Henry can foller us, Howlin'?"

"Him? Humph! No, by grab! He ain't smart enough for that, nor enough used to the woods. But—but they didn't have nothin' agin you, Lonesome!"

Bentley shrugged his shoulders.

"No, nothin'—only they arrested me as a pardner in the rob'ry; that's all. And they s'arched me and took my money; that's all. But I got it back. Jail? Not for me, Howlin', ef anybody happens to name it to ye!"

He dragged up a flat stone, turned the dry side up, sat down on it and put his feet over the fire. He was at the point of asking Howling Jim what it was that he had snatched from Sheriff Henry's hand, when Baskin said slowly:

"Leather burns quick when it's wet, Lonesome; don't stick 'em too clost. By the way, Lonesome, I got somethin' here what belongs to you."

From an inside coat pocket he drew an opened and unstamped and somewhat crumpled letter that had Bentley's name in a thin, feminine scrawl on the envelope, and this he passed into the hands of his pal.

"I never read it, o' course," he said.

Bentley took the missive and pocketed it almost without looking at it. He had been careful of the few letters Nancy had written

him, and it amazed him to think that he had lost one.

"Much obliged, Howlin'," he muttered. "Where'd ye find it?"

"It was that," said Baskin, "that the sheriff picked up from under the commissary safe, which I took from him and run with. I seed the ad-dress afore he did, and I—I knowed you never had no business back there—and I thought—I thought you——"

"I see," cut in Lonesome. "You thought it'd put me in bad about the safe-robbin', and you done it to clear me. Well, it was a fool thing to do, for I never lost the letter there, I'm shore! But—but you——"

He broke off, flushed slightly and began to stir the fire with a boot-heel. Baskin took up the thread that he had dropped:

"Brad had told me jest afore he sent me to ye this mornin', Lonesome, that you was might' nigh shore to be the camp's high-boy purty soon, and I was a-thinkin' about that when I took the letter and cut the mustard for the timber. It'd ha' sp'iled the job for ye, Lonesome, at least. I knowed, y'see, how much ye wanted to be a super. And, as for me," smiling, his eyes twinkling, "I—well, it don't matter about me. 'Cause I'm a-goin' to live, anyhow, till I die! Now ain't I?"

He looked back to the fire. Lonesome turned his gaze hard upon the rugged profile of his pal. So this was the fellow whom he had been about to denounce as a black traitor to their friendship. Lonesome Bentley wished vaguely that he were another man in order that he might kick himself clean across Little Brother Mountain.

"You been mad at me, Lonesome," suddenly said Howling Jim, without taking his eyes from the glowing coals. "It was partly that, too, what made me take the letter and run with it. I wisht I knowed what you been mad at me about, Lonesome."

Bentley told him straightforwardly:

"I seed you a-holdin' Nancy's hand. There on the creek, at the big poplar. It flew all over me like powder a-burnin'; I've died a thousand times sence that one minute, Howlin'. I reckon I ain't got any sense. I reckon ye must ha' had some good reason for a-doin' that, but I shore couldn't see it thataway till now."

Howling Jim sat up straight, smiling.

"I did have a good reason, Lonesome," he said. "That is, I think I did, by grab! I'll leave it to you. Y'see, I could easy tell that somethin' had come between you and her, and I was a-beggin' her to take ye back—and a-tellin' her what a fine, good young man ye was and how much ye liked her and how happy she'd allus be with you!"

"Was—that—it?" gasped Bentley.

"God knows it was," said Baskin.

He went into his corduroy coat and came back with something wrapped neatly in a blue bandanna. Ever so carefully he took the bandanna from it with his big and bungling but wonderfully gentle hands and passed it over to his pal. Lonesome took it and held it up to the dancing firelight. It was an old-fashioned tintype picture of a bareheaded and barefooted mountain lass, a smiling and pretty little mountain lass in calico.

"My sweetheart," Howling Jim said. "This is the only real secret I've ever kept from you, Lonesome. I never talk about it."

"Where is she now?"

"Under the snow."

After a minute of silence Baskin went on:

"I ain't never seed nobody else what could take her place, and I know I never will. That's why I go along a-singin' and a-whoopin' through life, jest to forgit, a-doin' the best I can with the little that the Almighty put into my wo'thless cyarcass, for I'm mostly jest plain meat, I reckon. It wasn't much o' my business, I know, Lonesome, for me to go to Nancy and ax her to take ye back. But—well, I thought mebbe——"

"It's all right," said Lonesome. "I thank ye for that, Howlin'. A man never had a better pal 'an you, Howlin'. I shore beg yer pardon for a bein' so low-down mean to ye! Here's the little picture."

He gave Baskin the tintype and rose. He would go straight back to Garrett Henry and tell him everything, though it surely meant jail for him. Baskin put the picture into his pocket, and he, too, went to his feet. Just then there came a most surprizing addition to the little drama there in the snowy wilderness.

THOSE two were not the only men in that wild country who knew woodcraft. An eavesdropper who had stationed himself on the cliff just above had lost his perilous footing, and he now came hurtling down with a resounding thump between Lonesome Bentley and

Howling Jim Baskin. The newcomer carried a revolver in a holster, and he wore a deputy's shield on his coat. It was Gideon Ashford.

Lonesome drew back a little as the Big Brother Creek camp's erstwhile bully turned a drawn and ashen face upward.

"You was shore in a devil of a hurry to get here, Gid!" he exclaimed mockingly. "Why couldn't ye jest ha' walked in like a decent white man?"

Baskin forgot himself and raised his foghorn voice:

"Drapped right down out o' the blue sky, by grab! Do ye bring us any glad message from the moon, Gid?"

Ashford struggled there on the ground between them, trying in vain to rise.

"My laig—" he mumbled. "Oh—my laig ——"

"By grab!" suddenly cried Howling Jim. "Ef his laig ain't broke plumb in two, might' nigh! Look there, Lonesome—it's all doubled up, and a bone is a-stickin' through below his knee!"

Bentley stooped over and saw, and he shuddered in spite of himself.

"It's a-bleedin'," Ashford said nervelessly; "it's a-bleedin'—Lonesome. You and Howlin' git me to a doctor ef ye can."

"We can, all right," Bentley replied narrowly. "We could simply take ye to the camp, and Super Brad'd shoot ye down to Jonesville on a loggin'-ingine. But you know what's a-waitin' for us at the camp!"

"What—Garrett Henry?"

"Yeuh, Garrett Henry," Baskin nodded. "And maybe a jail sentence or two. Ye cain't ax us to face it, Gid, a-hatin' jail like we does. But we're sorry for ye, 'count o' seein' ye so bad hurt. Though it might ha' sarved ye jest about right for a-snoopin' up there on the clift, a-listenin' to us open our hearts to the bottom. Still, we're sorry for ye, Gid."

"I'm much obliged, shore," tremulously growled Ashford. "But you a-bein' sorry for me don't do me a dang bit o' good!"

"Ef I might ax," drawled Lonesome, pointing to the deputy's shield that Ashford wore, "how comes it that ye're a sportin' that little bright thing on ye coat? 'Cause it's purty?"

At this thrust Gideon Ashford stared silently. His broken limb was beginning to give him excrutiating pain now. Baskin winked slyly at his sober-faced pal.

"And he's a-carryin' that .45, I reckon, Lonesome, to keep anybody from a-takin' the badge offen him! Say, Gid, that shore looks to me like Sheriff Henry's gun. How much did he offer ye to bring us in? Tell the truth, or I wisht I may drap dead in my tracks ef I turn a hand to he'p ye. And goodness knows ye're in a bad fix, out here miles from nowhere and not able to walk a step and ready to bleed to death."

Ashford didn't answer. He glanced toward the widening red circle in the snow under his leg, and fear gripped his heartstrings. Lonesome Bentley looked meaningly at Howling Jim.

"We'd better light a rag away from here, Howlin'," said he. "The sheriff might come enny minute. Come on; le's go. Good night to ye, Gid!"

The two turned from the fire, leaving Ashford staring after them with eyes that were afraid and full of pain, and started up the cove in the silent darkness. When they had gone well out of the circle of firelight, Baskin nudged his companion and whispered:

"Do ye really mean to leave him thataway, Lonesome? Wasn't we a little rough to him?"

"We won't go far," Bentley whispered back. "Maybe we was a little rough to him, but it was in self-defense. Don't y'see, Howlin'? Ef Gid knows anything about the rob'ry, mebbe he'll tell it as the price of us a-carryin' him to the camp. He knows he'll die here, and jail is allus better'n death to a skunk. I got a notion Gid is the robber hisself, Howlin', 'cause he's the only man in the outfit what's low-down enough to pull off a job like that."

"I've wondered ef it could possibly ha' been Billy Allison. He's sort o' lightheaded, Lonesome, a-bein' not much more'n a boy. How could Gid ha' got the safe open?"

"Ax somebody else. I don't know. But——"

A jerking, agonized yell from Gideon Ashford cut Bentley's speech short:

"Lonesome, come back! I'll make it safe for ye at the camp!"

The two pals turned and walked slowly to the now low-burned fire. Ashford stopped his groaning long enough to suggest that they carry him to the edge of the camp clearing and leave him there. They

wouldn't listen, and Ashford began to groan again. Finally he broke down completely.

"Take me to Garrett Henry," he begged, "and I'll clear ye both. It was me that robbed the safe. It was me that drapped the letter there at the safe, but I didn't do it a-purpose. I never knowed I'd lost it till Henry found it. I hid the six hundred dollars in the up-stairs o' the boardin'-house. Nancy, she handed me that letter to give to you, Lonesome, and I—I——"

"Opened it and read it," clipped Bentley, "like skunks allus does. Go on wi' the cat-killin'. How did ye git in the safe, Gid?"

"I watched Billy Allison when he put the money in it the night afore," confessed the pain-wracked Ashford, "and he—I seed that the fool boy'd forgot to lock it! Hurry, Lonesome, for I'm a-hurtin' awful, and I'd ruther go to jail 'an to die out here in the cold."

"Well, by grab!" almost shouted Howling Jim Baskin as he knelt to fashion a blue bandanna tourniquet for Ashford's torn and bleeding limb.

While Baskin worked with the injured man, Lonesome took Nancy's letter from his pocket, the letter that he had thought an old one, and read it by the firelight. In it Nancy declared that she had hardly slept since she had broken her engagement with him and asked him to forgive her, if he could, for having been such a fool. Bentley's heart leaped almost to his throat, and his smile was broad as he remembered that he had once started to her to beg her forgiveness for that same white little sin.

FIFTEEN days later, more or less, there came a bright and sunny Sunday afternoon when the snow was all gone. Bentley and Nancy walked up the woods path that led from old Nathan Kirkland's hewn-log cabin, entered the grassy clearing that held the logging-camp on Big Brother Creek and went to the boarding-house porch. There they turned to face smilingly some thirty stalwart timberjacks who had just broken off their usual Sunday afternoon horse-play to watch them.

"Boys," began the strong young man on the porch, removing his broad-brimmed hat with a rather grandiose sweep of his right hand, "I beg pe'mission to interduce Missis Superintendent Lonesome Bentley. Wish us well, boys!"

At first there was a mere murmur of sound among the loggers; then a ripple—then a wild and hearty yell rose from their throats and shattered itself against the two mountainsides. Bentley began to look the loggers over a trifle anxiously. Where was Howling Jim? He had invited Baskin to be present at his wedding, but Baskin hadn't promised. A hundred times before he had located his pal by merely listening for him; so now he raised a hand for silence, and silence came.

From somewhere high on the laurel-covered breast of the everlasting Big Brother there came to the ears of those in the valley a half-sad voice lifted up in a sort of abandon:

"Ye may break-a my bones with-a sticks and stones—
I'm a-goin' to live, anyhow, till I die!"

SAVAGES

A Four-Part Story

Part II

BY GORDON YOUNG

Author of "Heathens," "The Devil's Own," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

"HURRICANE" WILLIAMS, clad in a pair of trousers cut off at the knee, his skin burned black as that of a savage by the sun of the Southern Pacific, looked out from under heavy brows at the slender young man before him.

"Gilbert Lang," he said, "I am an outlaw—a nigger-lover. The most hated and despised white man in the South Sea Islands. Why do you want to come with me?"

Silently Lang held out a hand which bore a heavy ring on which were carved Greek letters. Williams seized the hand and gazed at the ring keenly. Then he asked a question.

"Man or woman?"

"Both—probably. I know they came to some one of these islands, and I was told that you went about on these islands more than any man. So I came to you."

Williams motioned to two handsome young savages, who came running.

"They will get your traps ashore and bring them here," he said to Lang.

So Gilbert Lang came to be the only white follower of Hurricane Williams. Of black followers Williams had many. A swarm of Tongans and Samoans, men and women, boys and girls, followed Williams as he went about the South Seas, trading, fishing, wandering. He was known as a terror. He was far more intelligent than the traders who hated him. And he had nothing to do with white men until Gilbert Lang came to him.

"Vengeance is mine," was written in Greek on the ring that Lang wore, and the three words told what had brought him to the South Seas. It was to revenge himself on the man and woman—brother and sister, supposedly—who had killed his brother. George and Alice Brown were their names, and Alice Brown had been his brother's wife. Lang had never seen either. He had sought them across the earth to the South Seas and joined fortunes with Williams that he might seek them the better.

Slowly he became accustomed to the strange life. The savages he found childlike in their happiness and love of play. The old men and women petted him; the young men became his comrades; the young girls coquetted with him; the children played with him.

Then Williams took the whole party on board his ship, the *Mary*, and sailed to an island where he knew of oyster-beds. Williams half expected a fight at the oyster beds. Not with the natives, for he quickly made friends with Ghorki, chief of the Gopassa people, and with Baraka, the devil-devil man. But with Willerby, king of the South Seas, who also knew of the wealth of the place.

As Lang sat alone one day, Uala, most beautiful of the native girls, crept up to him.

"I love you," she said softly.

Lang was lonesome and homesick. Uala was beautiful. He kissed her.

"Lang!" He heard an angry voice behind him, and he turned to see Williams glare at him a moment and then stride away.

GILBERT Lang was suffused with a feeling of guilt and shame. He, on a quest of vengeance, had stooped to dalliance, and with a savage! Memory of it would have been distressing enough without having to remember that Williams had come upon them. Williams was an enigma. Much about him was distasteful, yet his tense, dominant, personality in a certain way compelled admiration, and though Gilbert Lang tried to tell himself that he cared not one way or the other for Williams' approval, yet he knew that it was not so. He did care. He wished that he might not have to face Williams again.

What tidal folly could have so swept him from his senses? True, Uala was beautiful and sweet. But at best she was a native. Perhaps those pretty teeth of hers had picked dead men's bones! He shivered. He had kissed her again and again.

Tears of rage and shame came to his eyes and stood there glistening. The very thought of her evoked something of the fascination of her presence, and he tried to loath himself for his weakness in not being thoroughly disgusted.

Gilbert Lang was one of those complex organisms that can only be bred far from fields and forests. The *noblesse oblige* of culture was ingrained in him—or, rather, had veneered him. All men are emotionally alike deep down in their hearts; only in some the emotions are rarely, if ever, stirred. He was a clean-hearted, pure-eyed boy; but he was very young, and he had come from a hot-house world into jungles. He was bewildered that there was within him unsuspected emotions—weaknesses, to his way of thinking—that leaped up like monsters conjured by a wizard.

He had killed men; he had pressed his lips to the mouth of a savage woman! No. Gilbert Lang did not know, could not know, that the roots of him were down the mold; that he was a human being and nothing more; that the only difference between him and a bushman was the superficial difference of color and culture. He was no more aware of that than he was aware that he, and all men, carry within them traces of the gills that served their amphibian ancestors.

So he lay homesick, heart-sick and shamed; lay on his face, and his face was buried in the crook of his arm.

It was late in the afternoon when he looked up, and he rubbed his eyes from surprize.

Three ships had entered the bay. He knew nothing of ships, but one was larger than the other two.

The first flash into his brain was that he could get passage out on one of them.

He got up and hurried down to the beach, and even he thought it strange that there were so few natives in sight. When the *Mary* had come in, the water was alive with outriggers, and the beach crowded. Now not only the beach but the village seemed deserted. Here and there a little group of natives stood watching, but that was all.

A boat was being rowed in from one of the ships.

Gilbert Lang went out on the jetty built of coral rocks that ran some distance out to deep water, and there he waited.

As the boat made for the jetty, he could see that it contained three white men besides the black boys at the oars.

"What the —— 's the matter?" a roaring voice called at him some fifty yards from the landing as the boat came on.

"Nothing," he shouted back.

Gilbert Lang soon thought—and never afterward changed his opinion—that the burly, short-legged man with the great roaring voice was the most profane individual on earth.

Jeb Jackson never spoke without swearing. If one undertook to set down his remarks literally, the account would resemble nothing that ever got into print; and to indicate the censored oaths would be to scar the pages with unending dots and dashes.

His next remark, set down as near as one dares, was:

"Then why the —— —— ain't these —— —— —— niggers down at the —— beach? And who the —— —— are you?"

The boat, skilfully guided by the white man, who steered with an oar, slipped alongside, missing the rocks by the width of a lady's hand, and Jeb Jackson leaped to the jetty before the other men in the boat had even steadied themselves upright.

"My name is Gilbert La—"

"Gilbert, eh?" said Jackson, looking him over critically. "Well, Gilbert, I'm glad to meet you."

And he thrust out a hand like a lumpy, knotted ham.

"What you doin' here? Trader? Look more like a stray globe-trotter. What're the niggers doin', fattenin' you up? And what's the matter with these spit images of Satan? Want trouble, do they? They'll get it. Yes, son, they'll get it. Why ain't they down here beggin' tobacco and tryin' to trade smoked copra for new rifles? What's wrong?

"Hey, you fellow, come quick. Me fellow gammon you. Hurry up for the love of Judas Priest. Why you fellows no here? Want temback? Come here—" and Jeb Jackson let go of a spurt of profanity that almost gave the air a sulfur odor as he

shouted at the lone figure of a withered old native who came slowly, hesitatingly along the jetty.

Jackson liked to talk, or at least he seemed to like it. He always did most of it, and there was scant chance of any one interrupting him, for his was the booming voice of an old-time mate, who, in addition to a leather throat, had a barrel-like chest.

WHILE he was talking, the two other white men, both heavily armed, climbed on the jetty and stood curiously looking at Gilbert Lang. One of these men was obviously a sailor, a boatswain perhaps. The other was a man who seemed almost as much out of place at Gopassa as Gilbert.

He was rather thin and dark-hued, but with the darkness and body of the Latin. His eyes were black and cunning, and the mouth wore an unconscious, wicked sneer. He was neatly dressed in white duck and wore a yachting cap. He carried a rifle and wore two revolvers. The other man was as heavily equipped. Jeb Jackson did not have anything in the way of a weapon.

"Come here, you seventh son of the mother of Satan," Jackson shouted at the lone native; then, changing to the pidgin English used and understood throughout almost the whole of the South Seas, he demanded again that "you fellow" come closer.

Baraka cautiously edged nearer.

"DuBeque, this is Gilbert. Ain't a missionary, are you?" Jackson said, undertaking to introduce the man in white duck and at the same time make sure that the boy was not one of those most dreaded and hated persons in the islands. That is, dreaded and hated by the men who sailed with and for Willerby. The large ship moored out in the bay was the *Bebe*.

"Pleased to meet you," said DuBeque quickly, politely, perhaps influenced by Gilbert Lang's embarrassed but emphatic denial that he was a missionary.

And in his momentary confusion he neglected to explain that his name was not Gilbert but Gilbert Lang.

DuBeque talked with a soft and fluid ease; words came from his tongue smooth as dripping oil, and his voice was low-pitched, almost melodious, but just a little too unctuous.

While Jackson was trying to hold conversation with the wily Baraka, DuBeque pitched his voice low and in about thirty confidential seconds explained that he and his cousin were the guests of Winston Willerby, who had quite a party on board a charming and lively party—and they had not expected to find any white men at Gopassa. They were very much puzzled at the attitude of the natives, for it was unnatural and usually indicated hostile intention for the natives to stay off the water and beach when a ship came in.

DuBeque obviously said what he did in the expectation that Gilbert would in turn speak of himself.

And Gilbert did. He had at first no liking for DuBeque's face, but DuBeque seemed a gentleman. It was a pleasure to hear English spoken fluently and quietly again. And Gilbert was interested and hopeful to learn that there was a party of white people on the *Bebe*. He said that he had been traveling about with Hurricane Williams, who came to Gopassa some weeks before after pearls, and he could not imagine what was the matter with the natives, for they were certainly not hostile but friendly, very friendly.

DuBeque scarcely heard the last of Gilbert Lang's sentence. He hastily glided forward and prodded Jackson into an attitude of attention, saying excitedly:

"Hurricane Williams is here. Pearling, and Gilbert came with him. Williams has stirred up the niggers, as usual."

Jackson gave a questioning grunt and stared at Gilbert Lang doubtfully.

"You come with Williams?"

Jackson seemed skeptical. Gilbert did not look at all like the sort of a man Williams would take up with.

"Yes."

"So that tiger-shark is here? Pearling? Funny fellow, that Williams, ain't he?" Jackson asked in a tone that passed for low with him, but his voice rumbled like distant thunder.

Gilbert readily admitted that Williams was strange at times.

"So you say he's got these niggers primed for trouble with us, eh?"

"No, he didn't say that," DuBeque hastily put in. "I did. You know wherever this beach-comber goes he makes trouble for white men."

"Does he now?" Jackson asked. There was something peculiar in his manner of asking it.

"He's notorious," DuBeque insisted.

"Yes. Seems to me I've heard o' him," said Jackson with a shade of irony in his voice, and the irony, though lost to DuBeque's ears, caught Gilbert Lang's attention.

Jeb Jackson had formerly been mate on a Yankee whaler. That was years ago. He had beaten up a bullying, half-crazed skipper, then had taken to the beach and had stayed in the South Seas ever since, eventually going into the employ of Winston Willerby.

DuBeque swore viciously in his low, oily, smooth way, and said there was not a decent man in the South Seas who had not heard of Williams. And said that he was a trouble-maker.

"You're right. You're right, son," Jackson answered casually. "He's the greatest little trouble-maker—an' finisher—in these parts. Old W. W. ought to be quite interested. He's wished 'nough times he could run across him."

"By the way, Gilbert," DuBeque asked quickly, "come back with us to the ship? I want to introduce you to Willerby. Fine fellow to know. Will you?"

"I shall be pleased," said Gilbert Lang.

Jackson grunted. He knew Paul DuBeque and why DuBeque wanted to carry Gilbert back to the ship, where he and Willerby could question him about Williams.

"Hey, you, below there!" Jackson shouted down at the boat. "Throw up that raffle."

The "raffle" was odds and ends of trade goods, which the black boys threw up to Jackson. He had brought presents for the village, but, as none other than Baraka approached, Jackson generously presented the whole lot to him. Jackson was not a trader. He was a seaman. Willerby was a goods eaman himself when sober, but he kept Jackson near him and gave him the hard and dangerous work to do—as going ashore to a village that appeared hostile.

Paul DuBeque was a man after Willerby's heart. He had known Paul for years. Also he had known Paul's cousin—Lania—pronounced La-nigh-a—DuBeque. Some months before there had been trouble between Willerby and the DuBeques, and the latter fled into hiding, but recently everything had been patched over and the old relations resumed.

Gilbert Lang got into the boat, and, when it shoved away from the jetty, he wished that he might never again set foot on that island. He expected to, however. He was going on board the *Bebe* with no intention of not returning. He was beginning rather to like DuBeque, who was more friendly and courteous than any other man met since leaving Honolulu. And Jackson, too, in spite of profanity, seemed to be only a big, hale, hearty fellow. But Gilbert Lang sensed that Jackson had a kind of veiled contempt for DuBeque.

V

THE *Bebe* was moored a hundred and fifty yards from the jetty and within shouting distance of one of the luggers.

An awning that served to keep away rain or sun was stretched over the poop. A six-pound brass cannon with a carriage that could be run to port or starboard was in the waist. This was ostensibly for protection, but Winston Willerby occasionally took upon himself the prerogatives of European men-of-war and shelled a village. In those days and until recently, very recently, if a white man got killed or hurt in a coast village—no matter why or how—and a war-ship happened to come along, even months afterward, the village was shelled to show the savages that they could not trifle with the lives of civilized men.

Willerby was a big man in many a way. He really was. He had a genius for trade, for commerce, and what he may have lacked in attention to details and good management he made up in jealously keeping rivals from the field. He was a large-bodied man with a shaven red face, a heavy-jowled face, and gray eyes. His magnificence was unapproached in the South Seas, in Australia even. The *Bebe* was a beautiful ship and a floating palace. Willerby made money and spent it, and not the least of his expenditures were for food and drink. The chef on the *Bebe* had been drawn by Willerby's princely wage from a passenger-steamer. Her immense refrigerator was stored with ice. Rumor had it that Willerby every six months had a ship-load of ice brought to his plantation in the Fijis.

Willerby spent most of his time at sea and in good company. He kept a small

orchestra that furnished music for the nightly dance, for, now that he was in wealth and influence—if not officially—a king, he never sailed without companions, a half dozen or more guests. Trading-stations were to be visited, the Australian markets investigated and the footholds of independent traders to be jarred loose.

He combined business with pleasure and carried new stocks for his traders, took on board the contents of their warehouses, was ever ready to carry out any new scheme that had money in it. And pearling had a peculiar fascination for him, not only because the shell was valuable but because he seemed to have a genuine passion for pearls. He had luggers at Thursday Island and a schooner that every year visited Paumotu reefs. Any one who reported a new oyster-bed could always gain his ear.

The sun disappeared with almost the suddenness of being swallowed by some black cosmic monster that lurked near the western horizon just as the boat bearing Gilbert Lang approached the *Bebe*, but her poop was ablaze with lanterns, and the shadowy shapes of men and women could be seen through the rays of the lanterns; voices raised in laughter and bantering could be heard far out on the water.

Gilbert Lang followed DuBeque up the sea-ladder and to the poop. After them came the burly, barrel body of Jackson.

Gilbert Lang's first impression was of some attractive though unreal world into which he had been thrown. Two white-coated Chinese boys moved about on noiseless feet with trays and glasses in which the tinkling of ice was heard. Women, beautiful women, white women, in brilliant gowns and jewels—scarcely less resplendent in the lantern-light than if they all had been genuine—were grouped about men in pressed duck suits.

The soft lights took much of the hardness from the faces that he saw. The honest sun would have shown him that there was not a face there unmarked with a kind of cunning or without the scars of sin: no face but one, and hers was beautiful in the way that the evilest of women's often are for some few years.

Lania DuBeque had the flashing bizarre face that lures even the wise, the unillusioned, to folly. Some men, many in fact, might be sufficiently inexpert in character perception to believe her words and pose when she assumed a certain innocence. Others, most others, might know all there was to know about her and yet not care. Her voice, too, was soft and smooth; sweet and plausible her words—unless she spoke in anger, when a fishwife might well have shrunk.

She sat in a chair, a long wicker chair, and by her sat Winston Willerby.

Though it could at once be perceived that she bore a family resemblance to DuBeque, still she did not have either his eyes or his mouth. Her face was not regular in the classical fashion. The faces of fascinating women never are. In such faces there is a unique irregularity that first arrests the surprized attention; then the beholder more or less swiftly is likely to come under the spell of her serpentine personality. There seems to be something serpentine, wicked, about all really fascinating women.

"Hurricane Williams is over there!" DuBeque shouted breathlessly to Willerby.

The people about the deck drew near to listen. Most of them stared at Gilbert Lang, stared in that curious noncommital way that leaves people free to accept the stranger as a comrade or a spoil-sport. But their stares were not long nor steady. Most of them looked at DuBeque, who was very much excited, and some of them who knew of Hurricane Williams glanced repeatedly at Willerby to see how he was taking DuBeque's information.

BUT Lania did not take her eyes off Gilbert Lang's face. From under her long lashes she watched him steadily. Two long pendant black pearls were at her ears—not pear-shaped pearls, but baroques that had been matched with some care and a great deal of luck. Any one finding a large, shield-like baroque would never expect to find its mate, and the chances would be infinitely reduced if the baroque were black. 'Tis an old saying, and true; perhaps old as the pearl-fishers of Arabian waters from whence were drawn pearls of great price for Solomon, "Match a pearl, and you double the value of both."

Those pendant earrings were without price. They could not be purchased. Many women had worn them. They were, in a way, the tiara of Willerby's court. If a herald had cried it forth in a stentorian voice, it would not have been better known that the woman who wore them was not to

receive attention from other men: it would be perilous for her and for the men. Lania had first worn those earrings a year and more before and the eldest son of a lord had fallen in love with her. Lania and Paul DuBeque fled. The lord was notified by letter that reached to his English manor house that his son and heir had been hauled under by sharks.

Gilbert Lang did not notice how she was watching him. He, too, was listening to DuBeque and looking again and again at Willerby.

"He's trying to make trouble. Look at the way the natives act! And pearling on your grounds! Here is the chance to catch that pirate. He—" indicating Gilbert—"can give you the details," DuBeque concluded.

Willerby's fingers opened and shut writhingly on the arms of the chair, and his face grew red and more red with apoplectic rage. He looked Gilbert up and down and through him, too. Willerby was something of a judge of men. He sometimes said that none were to be trusted, which is a common opinion among men of large financial affairs, but still he had had to pick his traders, his agents and managers. He knew something of men, and he was trying to comprehend what that frail boy with the refined, not quite matured, face was doing with Williams.

"So you're in with him, are you?" Willerby said hoarsely, menacingly.

"No," said Gilbert Lang; "I took passage with him out of the Carolines. I know nothing about his business. He said he was an outlaw, and he has influence with the natives, and he is pearl-fishing. That is about all I know of him."

Now Gilbert Lang spoke the truth, and he was glad that he could say that and know it was true. He had no love for Williams, though a certain exasperating admiration—much like the charm of Uala—rose from time to time. But just at that moment, or rather afternoon and evening, he was glad to be able to say that they were not closely associated, scarcely acquaintances, certainly not friends.

A heavy guttural grunt rolled up from the chest of Jackson, who had been standing impassively near-by.

Gilbert Lang glanced at him. Jackson said nothing; he merely looked back at Gilbert Lang. But the look made the boy angry with Jackson, angry with himself, angry with Williams. The huge sailor seemed silently expressing contempt for one who denied his friend.

Now Gilbert Lang did not consider Williams his friend. He said so. He said so to Willerby, but it was for Jackson that he spoke. And every second Lania's steady dark eyes, peering alertly from under slumbrous lids, were on him.

"I'm glad to know that. Glad to know that, boy," said Willerby, who believed him.

Willerby spoke not in a hospitable manner but rather as a judge who has discovered that the suspected person is innocent of everything but bad company.

"But what are you doin' down here? Tell me that."

Gilbert Lang was impaled by that question. Willerby required an answer. He assumed the right to know the wherefore and why of every man's presence if there was the remote chance of it interfering with the Willerby interests. Gilbert Lang could no more tell his story than he could have been gratuitously insulting. The rebuke that Williams had given him when he had ventured to mention the tragedy back of his request had left a scar deep within him, and, besides, here were many ears, none of them sympathetic. But Gilbert Lang could not pose as a trader or a scientist or any of those things.

"Mr. Willerby," he said, "I came down to the South Seas to rather look around, and I didn't have the faintest idea that it was nearly as large as it is. I wouldn't want to call myself an 'adventurer', but that is about the nearest to it."

"Has Williams been gettin' pearls?"

"Not that I know of."

"He's got that gang of niggers with him, hasn't he?"

"Samoans and Tongans."

"By —— I'll get him and get him tonight!" Willerby cried, springing up and not wholly unconscious of the dramatic value of his words and manner.

He was angry, but he was not too beside himself to note the admiring murmurs and eyes of his guests—if such a parasitical lot could be called by that ancient and honorable name.

"We'll steal a march on him," Willerby went on, interrupting the statement of his intentions at this point to curse the soul

and body of Williams. Then: "Jackson, you take what men you need. No lights, understand. Land on the beach. This boy'll go along and show you the way. Grab him and get back before his niggers know you have him. I want to tell that fellow to his face what I think of him; then——"

Willerby ended abruptly with a significant sweep of his arm that suggested pushing somebody overboard into the black water.

"I'll make your fortune for you," he said to the horrified boy. "From this day on Winston Willerby is behind you. And that means something down in this country. Don't it?"

His question was an appeal to those who stood about him, and emphatic words flashing hastily from male and female throats, many of them loud words so that he might be sure which throat had spoken, agreed that it meant much: it was the greatest thing that could happen to a man in the South Seas. Some of the women cast speculating glances at Gilbert Lang. He had suddenly become worth while.

Only Lania DuBeque remained silent. She was above such flattery. Hers was more subtle. Besides, she was sure of her position on board the *Bebe* or at the home plantation in the Fijis. But not for one second did she take her eyes off Gilbert Lang. There was something about the boy that more than interested her—almost disturbed her. She could not tell what it was.

"Well," Willerby continued, in the large way that a man may assume when by a smile or a frown he has the power to affect the fortunes of others, "you're in with Winston Willerby from now on. Just go along with Jackson here and point out that —— ——'s hut, and Jackson and his men'll do the rest."

Now Gilbert Lang had found Williams a peculiarly unfriendly man and disagreeable as well as at times terrifying. The boy had been born into a home and raised in surroundings where a very deep and sincere religious feeling existed. Williams had been constantly blasphemous. More even than that, Williams had on one horrible occasion said that he would not crook a finger to stop a cannibal feast. He had many reasons for disliking as well as fearing Williams, and few were known for liking him.

True, he had awakened out of his feverish delirium to find himself in Williams' hut and hammock, but Gilbert Lang knew nothing of Williams' vigils, his unremitting attention. He knew no more of those things than of Uala's gift of her precious knife to Baraka as the price for exorcising the devil out of him. It was natural that Gilbert Lang would, almost invariably, mistake discourtesy—such as was continuous in Williams—for a kind of repulsiveness of character.

He did not feel the personal loyalty of the comrade for Williams, and, being very young, as well as more or less unconsciously eager to tell something—to give information—which is an impulse by no means restricted to the youthful—he had been unaware of the ugly sound his words had had when he disclaimed all knowledge of Williams' business and all friendship for him.

But Willerby's suggestion smote Gilbert Lang as an insult would have done. In a way it was an insult. To deny friendship for Williams was one thing: to deliver him into the hands of the unfriendly was another.

"Mr. Willerby," he said, his voice trembling from the effort to remain calm, "I could not think of doing such a thing as you propose!"

THERE was silence about the deck as those unexpected words fell from his lips. Willerby looked at him; just looked, as a monarch might stare at some poor fool who had done an incomprehensible thing. DuBeque's evil lips parted in a kind of amazed gasp. Jeb Jackson slipped his thumbs into his belt, leaned against the railing and sort of relaxed into the attitude of a spectator. Jackson's face was heavily bearded; so no one could detect the sort of a smile that ran along his mouth. Lania DuBeque narrowed her eyes and leaned slightly forward.

Then Willerby cut loose. He cursed the boy with a boatswain's tongue, accused him of being a Williams spy, of the same breed and ilk as that thrice-damnable thief and white cannibal, as well as an ingrate! For wasn't he, Willerby, about to make his, Gilbert Lang's, fortune? And that was the manner of his repay!

"Jackson," he concluded, "throw him into irons! He'll never get off this ship again—alive!"

Then it was that Lania DuBeque gasped.

Her black eyes, suddenly fierce, shifted to Willerby's face, and she put out a hand as if to protest. But the hand fell again to the arm of her chair. She lay back and kept silent, watching Gilbert Lang intently.

The boy, slender, pale with anger, confused by the injustice, stared at Willerby. Willerby was furious, but Gilbert Lang thought such an order must at most be only a threat. Men did not do such things!

But Jackson, taking a half dozen steps forward, called from the poop for Grogan, the third mate, and Grogan came.

"Irons. An' drop him down the forward hatch," said Jackson carelessly with a gesture toward Gilbert Lang.

"Git!" cried DuBeque, ever anxious in some distinguishing way to aid the wishes of Willerby, as he gave the boy a shove and kicked him.

Gilbert Lang wheeled and leaped. He smote the fastidious DuBeque on the mouth and whirled another fist to the jaw. The dormant blood of his fighting forefathers who had raised to prestige the name of Lang was foaming in his veins. Again, as among the raiding bushmen, he knew no fear and had no thought of it. Injustice set him wild. Willerby's order to throw him into irons had made him like a barrel of dry powder, but it was DuBeque who applied the match.

Lania DuBeque sprang to her feet and drew back. She did not cry out. Others were doing that.

The fight was short. Its length was scarcely countable in seconds. It was not really a fight, for Paul DuBeque did nothing but scream and try to protect himself by bending down and covering his face.

When Jackson, profanity flowing from his bearded mouth, reached out a powerful, deliberate arm and gripped Gilbert Lang, then DuBeque remembered the revolvers at his side and snatched at them.

With feline swiftness Lania pushed him to one side, crying—

"You fool!"

Willerby was storming and ordering all manner of terrible things at once to be done to Gilbert Lang—whose name he even did not know, had not heard.

But Jackson, half pushing and half carrying the boy down the poop ladder, turned him over to Grogan.

"Put him somewhere so W. W. don't stumble across him. Stick him some place—to keep him from 'scaping—an' DuBeque from knifin' him," said Jackson to Grogan in a whisper.

Then aloud with lurid oaths he roared for Grogan to make Gilbert Lang lament the day of his birth and that he had never learned manners enough not to strike gentlemen in the face.

"A-r-r-right!" said Grogan hoarsely and fiercely, jerking the struggling, dazed boy along as easily as a man might pull a frail child.

Willerby was beside himself. He was often beside himself. But familiarity with his rage did not breed contempt in those who lived on the ship with him. True, Lania DuBeque had a way of seeming unimpressed. But, if there was something of the roaring bull in him, there was a good deal of the tiger in her. Probably no other woman would ever have returned as she did to face Willerby's jealous rage when she had fled it; possibly she was ashamed of herself for having fled, and that was why she returned.

Too, she may have been aware of her charms and confident. It is the consciousness of beauty, not of brains, that makes women daring in that picaresque, sensational way that frequently startles not only communities but nations.

As Willerby stamped the deck and stormed, all but Lania and Paul DuBeque drew respectfully away from him. DuBeque, presuming somewhat on his battered face, solicitiously felt of his swollen lips, and a finger with a delicate touch ran along his jaw to see if it were really broken.

"Take the crews off the luggers and every man off the *Bebe* and go get that fellow Williams!" Willerby shouted at Jackson. "Bring him here! I'll tend to him! I'll show him that Winston Willerby can't be made a fool of. Send that girlish kid here as a spy, will he? By —— I'll cut his eyes out and use 'em for fish-bait! Do you hear me?"

"Yes," Jackson rumbled. "I hear you. But——"

"But what?" Willerby demanded impatiently.

"We can muster about ten white men." He paused to let his eyes sweep the guests in the background, who, though white men—and women—were not included in the muster. "And Williams—he ain't called

a 'Hurricane' 'cause he has a windy mouth, either—is the best rifle-shot 'tween here an' hell an' has a hundred niggers, too."

"You're afraid!" Willerby sneered.

"LET me go, W. W.? I'll bring him!" said DuBeque speaking with effort at articulation because of his swollen lips.

But, at the same time as he spoke, Paul DuBeque assumed what he thought was an attitude of utter exhaustion and physical debility which a courageous fighting-spirit was trying to overcome. He was pretty confident that Willerby would tell him to go to bed instead. DuBeque's histrionics were not lost on anybody but Willerby. They all played the same game of flattery, sympathy and pose and were jealous when one was more successful than the others. All, that is, of Willerby's guests and social associates.

"Hear that," said Willerby in rising anger to Jackson. "This boy's willing to do it. An' you're afraid. You give me excuses——"

"Let him," said Jackson, whose temper was like touchwood anyway and whose respect for DuBeque was only to be represented by a minus quantity.

For Willerby he did have respect and a certain, though not exaggerated, liking. Willerby had faults, and of late years was given to wanton overbearing, but he was a bold, ruthless fellow and, if cruel, not without courage.

"Let him," Jackson repeated. "An', if Williams ever starts for him, he'll think he's tangled up with a couple o' bolts o' lightning. Now listen, W. W. I know this fellow Williams. I don't simply know of him, like the rest o' you. I know him. When I was a young fellow in the States, I went out West to what they called cow-towns and mining-camps. An' this fellow Williams is what them people 'd call a killer'. You send a gang over there after him, an' some o' us may come back, an' some won't, an' you won't be no nearer to Williams than you are now.

"He's not over there asleep. I'll bet he's got black boys with rifles squatting all along back of the beach, an' at the first whoop out o' him all —— 'll break loose. I'm not afraid o' him or no man, but I don't want to commit suicide."

Jackson could have told, had he chosen—but he never told any one—that his introduction to Williams had been swift and painful. Jackson, for scarcely more of a reason than that he was half-drunk and hard-fisted, had once upon a time knocked down a black boy on a beach, when there suddenly appeared a man, half-naked, seemingly scarcely more than half of Jackson's size. Jackson's shipmates were ashore and around him; they had laughed when he hit the nigger.

"Apologize to that boy," said the strange white man, in a strange quiet, tense way as the moaning native rose fearfully and unsteadily.

Jackson's reply was what any one might expect it to have been.

The answer of the strange white man was most unexpected.

When Jackson somewhat recovered consciousness, after passing through a sort of blurred haze of bumps and blows, he had raised himself from the sand and saw the man and native walking off together while his own shipmates stood in a kind of silent wonder, watching.

Jackson cursed them for their inaction that they should so go back on a shipmate as to let the fellow get away.

"That's Hurricane Williams," said a grizzly old harpooner who had been much in those waters.

"An', if you don't want 'im t' git awye," said an English sailor, "just shout fer 'im to come byke. 'E'll come ha-runnin'."

In the three or four years since that Jackson had not met him again or mentioned their first introduction. He had heard much of Williams, of his amazing suddenness and strength, his readiness to fight or to kill, of his cunning and boldness.

"Don't want to commit suicide?" Willerby repeated contemptuously. "DuBeque, take what men you want and bring that fellow here—alive!"

Willerby said it with a majestic flourish. He laid his hand on DuBeque's shoulder as a king might lay an accolade on some obscure soldier who was being raised to the post of honor and danger abandoned by a craven captain. But the dramatic climax was close to being ruined by something resembling a snicker that ran through the group, and DuBeque's knees threatened to give way beneath his amazement. Even Lania smiled understandingly and not without enjoyment.

Jackson was a good sailor and in those

largely ill-charted or uncharted waters as good a navigator as Willerby could expect to find in combination with a certain unscrupulousness and close-mouthed loyalty. He valued the last as much as seamanship, and so Jackson often presumed upon that value, as in the instance of his refusal to try kidnaping Hurricane Williams.

DuBeque, having bluffed, realized well enough that it was ruinous not to pretend at least to be proud and make the effort.

Some of the things which DuBeque may have lacked in courage he replaced with cunning.

"I'll go alone," he said. "Just let me have enough men to row the boat."

There probably was not a person who heard him, excepting Willerby, who did not believe that DuBeque rejected companions so there would be no witnesses to deny the story he could tell by way of explaining his failure. And that is probably exactly what DuBeque at first had in mind.

"Hear that, Jackson? This lad is going alone. Or willing to. I won't allow it, Paul. No. Take fifty or a hundred men. By —— we'll all go!"

It made no difference that Willerby could not possibly have mustered a hundred men; he was given to speaking in large numbers.

But DuBeque protested, and his protests were sincere. He said that many would attract attention and they would have the whole villages and Williams' natives on them in the darkness. He believed he could manage alone better. Just get the boat ready and give him time to wash up a little. A vague idea of what he might be able to do had come to him.

And he walked to the companionway with the conscious importance of a hero.

Willerby was pleased with him, said things of praise, and others had to agree readily with the compliments.

Lania slipped away unnoticed and followed DuBeque, coming into his cabin as he stood with a wash-rag in hand before a mirror.

"I'm proud of you, Paul. Proud of you," she said sweetly and suiting her expression to the words.

He took the words as a hungry shark takes pork.

"I'll show that bunch of cheaps! I know what they've all been saying. They're crazy with jealousy since we got in so good with W. W. again."

"Oh, those cats and snakes! Does it hurt much?" she asked with an appearance of tenderness, coming closer and letting a sinuous arm slip around his waist.

"How'd you like to have your face battered up! Say, and why'd you stop me when I was going to kill that fellow?"

There was a touch of menace in the question.

"Paul!" she exclaimed injuredly. "And when you know how all those people hate us—and if something should happen to Willerby? You wouldn't have had a chance before the British Commissioner. They'd have sworn it was cold-blooded murder. There would have been seven or eight against just us two. You must think of such things."

He was thoughtful for a moment. Lania's reasoning was a little far-fetched but plausible enough if one admitted that something might happen to Willerby.

"Nothing will happen to him!"

"Let us hope not! But you can't tell. He's drinking hard. And this Williams——"

"Leave that fellow to me," he said mysteriously.

"But W. W. said he wanted him alive!"

"Don't worry. He'll be alive. But that Gilbert—he won't long!"

"What did you say his name was?" she asked quickly.

"Gilbert. I'm going to stick a knife in him."

"Gilbert? Gilbert. Mr. Gilbert," she repeated thoughtfully.

There was something about the boy but nothing about the name that stirred vague things somewhere in Lania's brain. He was a beautiful, poised, refined boy such as few women of the far places have ever met.

"Who is he?" she asked.

"I don't know. And I don't care. I can tell you what he'll be in less 'an a week, if that'll interest you. A corpse!"

Lania, motionless, looked at him from the corners of her eyes.

"Say," he flashed at her, turning from the mirror, "and you've got to hit it up harder. You've been cold as an icicle round W. W. lately. Beginning to be again like you were just before you met Ballantyne."

Ballantyne was the eldest son of the English lord who, so his father had been told, was pulled down by a shark.

"If I drank like the rest of those cats, I'd soon look like them," she said, at once

explaining and evading his remark. "I have to keep my head and face. I don't wear these—" touching the black pearl pendants —"because I go to bed drunk every morning."

"You take care not to pull any more fool plays. I'm in good with Willerby now, and I'm not going to lose out for you or anybody."

"You wouldn't throw me to the sharks, would you, Paul?" she asked with just a perceptible trace of lightness.

The question was at once figurative and literal.

"No," he replied with frank irony, dabbing his swollen face with ointment, "I wouldn't throw you overboard any sooner than you'd throw me. All along you've been the one that was in good and me just hanging on by my eyelashes. But I'm solid now, and after tonight—you can all go to —— if you don't like my ways. W.W. won't forget in a hurry who brought this Huricane Williams on board."

There was some truth in that. Much. Lania had no love for Paul—no more than he had for her. But down deep in her heart she was afraid of him. She always had been afraid of him. And he was far from being indifferent to her anger. So they had somewhat pooled their fortunes and, though rather distrustful of each other, had accepted a common alliance against the others with whom Willerby took up. Besides, there was the tie of blood which rather singled them out for the "alliance" rather than gave strength to it.

If Paul should be killed, Lania would shed tears, appear inconsolable and really miss him. But she would be relieved. She rather wished at times that something would happen to him. But she never showed it, and not altogether futilely she kept up a pretense of affection: not so much because she was a hypocrite as because she knew very well that "something" would happen to her if Paul ever became aware of her real feeling toward him.

WHEN DuBeque came on deck, the four-piece orchestra was strumming away below, and the harmony came to deck through the open skylight. Some few, one or two couples, were dancing; the others sat around laughing and drinking from the trays of the white-clad, noiseless-footed Chinamen.

It was far from being the gay, social, light-hearted group that it appeared to be—that those in it tried to deceive themselves into believing that it was. Normal people on shipboard quickly grow tired of one another. And these people were not normal. They had no common denominator of interest except what they could get out of Willerby. Each was jealous of the other; they gossiped furiously, sometimes quarreled and were nightly drunk. Yet the women wore gaudy dresses and imitation stones; the men had clean pressed duck from day to day.

"Oh, Paul, don't get hurted," cooed a sharp-tongued little blonde.

"What're you going to do? Take the brass cannon?"

"Yes, where's your artillery, Paul?"

"If that kid had hit him on the other side of the face, he'd look like a nigger with the mumps," said the little blonde.

But, as Willerby came up with Lania on his arm, the voices fell and the jibes were less audible.

"I'm ready, W. W.," said DuBeque.

"Why, you've forgot your guns, boy!" exclaimed Willerby.

"I've a Derringer in my pocket. I'd carry two holsters if I was going over there to bluff," he said with all the aplomb of a hero. "But I'm going to bring him back with me."

And Paul let his eyes stray around the group.

"That's the talk, old boy!" said the blonde.

"He'll do it, too!" loudly remarked a fat roué who suffered from a perpetual shortness of breath.

But he had a seemingly endless supply of "good" stories: that is, the sort of stories that were appreciated on the *Bebe*.

"Paul," said Willerby, again laying his hand on the young man's shoulder with a kind of rough affection, "I oughtn't to let you go. It's too risky. Don't take any chances with that——"

And what Williams was in Willerby's opinion had best be left to inference.

"I'm doing this for you, W. W. You've been good to me and Lania—" something that resembled a very determined effort at tenderness came into his voice at the mention of Lania— "and anything we might do is only paying the interest on our debt, so to speak."

And the blonde whispered to the fat raconteur:

"Can you b'lieve it! And the old boy swallows that gush."

And the fat man, with a wheeze and a puff, whispered back:

"It's Lania the old boy's swallowed. Paul's just hangin' on to her petticoat."

"That snake!" hissed the little blonde, who hated tall dark women as a matter of esthetic principle.

"Boy," said Willerby, "I haven't done a thing for you more 'an you richly deserved. From now on I'll show you what the friendship of Winston Willerby is worth. By —— I'll see that you make money——"

"Not money, W. W. Just your friendship. That's all I want!"

It was raw; not another person on board would have had the consummate nerve to say such things in the presence of others, though any one who could quietly get to Willerby's ear went as far or further. Many of the so-called big men of the earth want their flattery raw and strong, as others want their liquor. They have no appreciation of flavors and delicacy.

DuBeque had long perceived what the others had not noticed or, if so, had not had nerve enough to act on: Willerby liked to be praised in public; he enjoyed having spectators. Others shrank from the ridicule of their companions. Paul endured the ridicule and won the guerdon. But then he had more cunning than most people. Any of the others would have been confused, routed, if they had ventured the bluff of going after Hurricane Williams and had unexpectedly been sent.

"All ready there, Grogan?" Jackson shouted down from the side.

A thick Irish voice rolled back up.

"All ready, DuBeque."

"Good luck an' look out!" said Willerby.

Voices shouted their best wishes, tinged with compliments, as Paul went down to the sea-ladder and got into the boat.

"Oh, I don't know what would become of me!" said Lania in soft-voiced agony to Willerby's ears alone.

"I'll take care of you—always! Paul's a fine boy. May no harm come to him. But you—God! You look great tonight!"

Then at the secret shrine of her inner heart Lania prayed that her cousin would meet Hurricane Williams and die.

VI

THE BOAT, after some delay in locating it, landed at the jetty.

"Give me a lantern," said Du Beque.

It was a black night, with that forbidding, tropic blackness that is most ominous under a half-clouded, half-starlit sky when all the land and bush is one solid shadow.

Grogan thought it a strange request for a man who was about to slip into a village. But he produced a lantern out of the locker.

"Light it," said DuBeque.

He was very uncomfortable and wished himself headed for the brilliantly lighted *Bebe* rather than the labyrinthine blackness of the shore.

"Phwat the devil does yez want wid a lanthern whin——"

"Will you light that lantern and leave me and my business alone?" stormed DuBeque. "Think I want to break my neck wandering around in that bush?"

Grogan sullenly lighted the lantern and had some difficulty in concealing the wish that some such thing would happen to DuBeque.

"Wait here till I come back," said Du Beque as he started off, his mouth in his throat, every nerve taut and his fingers tightly gripping the derringer that he had withdrawn from his pocket.

He wished that he had not only brought two holsters but every man who could carry a gun. He began to be exceedingly fearful that he had undertaken more than was wise and seriously debated blowing out the lantern and sitting himself down for an hour, then reappearing with some stirring story of what he had tried to do. But he was stung by the knowledge that almost everybody on board expected him to do some such thing as that.

His story might not even fool Willerby. The old man had surprizing and fiery moods, and he was not a pleasant one to whom to report failures, no matter how they were garnished with details of the efforts made.

Now it is not for one minute to be supposed that DuBeque would have ventured into Gopassa if he had really believed any of the more barbarous things that he and others pretended to believe about Williams. When the *Bebe* came in, those on board had been surprized and a little suspicious of trouble because the natives kept out of

sight, but DuBeque very craftily realized, after he had blundered into his request to go for Williams, that, if Gilbert Lang had lived among these natives for weeks and felt no fear, it was comparatively safe for him, DuBeque, to go into the village.

It was pretty well known, too, that Williams tried to avoid trouble, but crowd him, threaten him, and it was something like tying a flaming torch to the tail and a red rag to the horn of a wild bull. That was the reason why DuBeque had summoned up courage enough to appear to be unarmed. DuBeque knew that he was really running but little risk, but he had a difficult time to feel that way about it. He had lived in the South Seas long enough to be familiar with the fact that the coast natives, as a rule, are not wanton murderers.

True, some head-hunter is always likely to be the prowling exception, and the offenses of one white man are apt to be vicariously expiated by feasting from the next who comes. But, if Gilbert Lang had had the run of the village, he, DuBeque, would be reasonably safe. DuBeque had been cunning enough to see that, though he had some trouble in summoning up courage enough to act on it. And, while there were none to deny that Hurricane Williams was a dangerous man, there were some to defend his character: particularly the old-timers who had married native wives and settled down to patriarchal dignity and who resented the encroachment of civilization.

DuBeque was confident that, if he could come face to face with Williams, he would come to the end of his scheme all right. He was cold with fear, jumpy and nervous by being forced to walk alone in the ever-mysterious night, fringed—one might say—by the jungle growth. Yet he had to come alone. He would not, for almost anything, have let those on the *Bebe* know what words he intended to use to Williams. There were depths within depths to the cunning of Paul DuBeque.

DuBeque had left the jetty and was walking up the beach toward a hut, the shaggy roof of which was faintly perceptible in the dimmest of starlight.

A voice close at hand called out in painful English—

"Who you?"

The jerk of the lantern showed how high DuBeque jumped, and in his fear he came near shooting blindly.

With some effort DuBeque stammered in the trade vernacular:

"Me fellow come gammon him fellow Williams. You fellow go me quick."

There was no direct answer for some time, but he could hear voices clacking and murmuring where his remark was evidently being debated. The delay and suspense came near to stiffening DuBeque's hair. The impulse to drop the lantern and run was strong, and the cold sweat stood on him as on the body of one dead from fright, but he succeeded not only in standing his ground but in calling out:

"You fellows like —— quick. No plenty time."

The voices grew a little more loud. Then the crunch of sand, and out of the darkness of pandanus bushes shapes moved toward him

DuBeque lifted his lantern to get a look. Three stalwart natives, not Solomon Islanders, approached, and each carried a rifle. That was a little unusual, more so than one might think when rifles are the chief desire of a native toward a trader. But the tropic rust, particularly in the wet Solomons, soon reduces the uncared for rifle to such a state of junk that even the native throws it away. Of course, it is always evil spirits that ruin the precious rifle.

"Me go with you," said one who spoke English after a fashion.

"Who are you?" DuBeque asked as he scrutinized the handsome face—handsome, that is, for a native.

"Banoo."

Then Banoo strode off, leading the way.

Williams sat in his hut with the door drawn. It was drawn not for protection or fear of peering eyes but somewhat to shut out the insects that would swarm and fall finger-deep about the light, flap themselves on the pages of the book he was reading and crawl over his body with irritating slowness. The book he read was a book of his own writing, a sort of amplified log, not of adventures and what he saw, but a thing full of nautical findings, of winds and depths and tides and sightings.

Banoo scratched on the door and spoke; then Williams slipped it back.

Banoo told him that this lone man had come off the *Bebe* to talk.

"What do you want?" Williams asked before Banoo had finished.

The question came out like the uneven volley of a squad.

DUBEQUE stepped closer, came into the square of light that the lantern, hung from the hut rafter, shot through the doorway. The lantern that he carried had made only a pool of light about his feet.

Then DuBeque lied as with all of his practise he had never lied before. He did not choose his words with care but spoke with that fluent earnestness that is so amazing to truth-tellers, who are not only surprized that some people will deliberately misstate facts but elaborately relate false details.

DuBeque began by saying "that boy Gilbert" had got himself into trouble. He had heard that Willerby was no friend of yours, Williams, and said that he was not one either.

"I'm one of Willerby's managers, Williams, and he has often been angry at you. He thinks you've interfered with his traders and recruiters before now, but down deep the old man's had to admire you. I've often heard him say so. He is a good deal of a fighter himself. Especially in his younger days, and, whenever he has thought you have hurt his pocketbook—why, of course, he has been furious. But, when that fellow Gilbert came on board and said he heard that Hurricane Williams was an outlaw and pirate and that Willerby wanted him and that he, Gilbert, would be glad to point out your hut so a party could sneak up and grab you—why, Williams, W. W. very nearly tramped the deck in. He was that mad.

"He just tore around, and I got this—" indicating his blackened face—"by stepping in between them when he was swinging on that fellow Gilbert. W. W.'s a big man, and that fellow's nothing but a boy, and I knew W. W.'d be sorry—he always is—if he hurt the boy. But the idea of anybody suggesting such a thing to him made him clear crazy. He sent me over here to tell you about it. Gilbert's praying the old man won't put him ashore, and the old man won't have him on the ship."

Williams listened closely. His body was stiff and rigid, his eyes agleam. Out of the bitterness of experience with his fellow men he saw no reason for doubting that Gilbert Lang had done precisely as DuBeque said. The boy had never concealed dislike for him, and that afternoon he had undoubtedly been frightened by having Williams surprize him with Uala. Treachery was what Williams expected from all men, all white ones. He had thought Gilbert Lang different.

The boy was different from most men, but in them all was the streak of treachery. So, though he might believe what was reported ill of Gilbert Lang, he saw no reason for accepting what was reported gallant of Winston Willerby. He had never met Willerby, but he had met men who told of Willerby's anything but gallant threats toward him.

"Is that all you have to say?" Williams asked through a strained throat, though his voice was not loud.

"Why, yes," DuBeque replied, surprized, disconcerted, "about all——"

"Then go to ——!"

Those words came slowly, deliberately, as if definitely ridding himself of DuBeque, Willerby and Gilbert Lang.

Williams turned abruptly to the table and sat down, his back toward the door outside of which stood DuBeque and Banoo.

"But, Williams," DuBeque protested, scarcely knowing what he would say next but determined to say something, anything, that might possibly get through the baffling reserve of this man.

"But, Williams," he repeated, speaking very earnestly, for he was in earnest, "I know how you feel about that boy, and I don't blame you. I know the chance of you and Willerby ever really being friends is too remote to suggest. I know you don't care what Willerby or anybody else that trades or recruits thinks of you—" the words were coming easier now; DuBeque could see a clear course of argument—"but here is a chance for you to meet Willerby, and you can tell him just what his traders and blackbirders do do. He doesn't believe the reports, Williams.

"We've all hinted at the way they rob and kidnap, but it makes him furious, because he simply doesn't believe it. And, to be honest with you, all of us are afraid to tell him the cold truth. You are not. And, as I told you before, the old man admires you. You should hear the way he makes fun to their faces of the officers that go poking about in gunboats trying to locate you. Of course, that's only if none of his traders or captains have recently had a run-in with you. W. W.'s a queer old fellow, Williams, but he has a big heart. He wants to meet you. He sent me over here to ask you to come aboard this evening. You can see, I came alone."

The last sentence was the most eloquent that DuBeque had said. It left to plain inference much that no amount of words could have made so effective.

Now Hurricane Williams was, for reasons of his own, an exile. He had taken up with and lived entirely among those who are called savages because their society, cast of mind and values—but more especially their nakedness—differ from those of the earth's dominant nations. He hated white men with an intensity that could not have endured without being perpetually nourished by memories. Yet the roots of his being ran too deeply into the white race, which had borne him and his fathers, to be torn out even by all the strength and fierceness with which he had torn at them.

His conscience was clear. It was sheer bitterness that made him hate his race, yet he knew, though he might try not to acknowledge it within his own thoughts, that there were men other than the treacherous, dishonest, brutal, sneaking fellows it seemed his fortune to have always encountered. Gilbert Lang had seemed such a one. It was a surprize, but scarcely a disappointment, to hear that he was not. However, it was a surprize to hear what he had of Willerby.

He did not feel enraged toward Gilbert Lang. When a man has been disappointed oft in much the same way, he ceases to feel a sense of injury against any one in particular but holds a grudge against the general class, as the misogynist, misanthrope, Anglophobe—or, as in Williams' case, against white men.

He wheeled on DuBeque with the words:

"I'll go—as you came. Alone."

Again the inextinguishable hope, like a fire that could not be tramped out or deadened by water, lifted a tiny flame. Perhaps Willerby was such a man as DuBeque had said.

DuBeque did not know it, but he had his battered features, swollen lips and eyes largely to thank for his success. One glance at his normal face and Williams would have distrusted him. As it was, Williams did not really believe him. He simply did not entirely doubt him.

Williams went as he was; that is, naked except for trousers cut off above the knees and unarmed except for a sheath-knife with lanyard to it which he could slip over his wrist. He wore the knife because it was handy in the brush or water; if occasion required, it might serve to rip a shark. Williams was as much at his ease in the water as any native, and those of the coast are practically amphibious.

He walked swiftly along the street, and DuBeque was hard put to keep up with him, and, though he spoke from time to time, Williams did not answer.

Not only Banoo but a group of armed natives joined him on the way and followed to the end of the jetty.

Before he got into the boat, Williams said something to Banoo that the white men did not understand, but one of the black boys at the oars heard and shivered. He chanced to be a Samoan.

Williams dropped lightly into the boat and sat down. DuBeque followed with the order to shove off.

"Mr. Grogan," said DuBeque, too pleased with himself to keep quiet, "this is Mr. Williams!"

GROGAN was embarrassed. He had no use for DuBeque. He wondered if Williams could be the man rumor made him out, since DuBeque had brought him so easily. DuBeque had not said that as an introduction—at least Williams took no notice of it—but rather a veiled way of gloating. However, Grogan, being of that rough class among whom an introduction invariably implies a handshake, put out his hand and took it back. Williams stared at him but said nothing, made no move.

"Mr. Grogan is one of our officers," DuBeque hurried on explanatorially and apparently a little afraid that he had made what the French call a *faux pas.*

DuBeque did not intend to conceal from anybody that he had cajoled Williams into the trap. He was proud of that. But he was quite sure that even Willerby would not approve of the manner in which it had been done if he knew of it. That was really the chief reason DuBeque had dared to go alone. Willerby would be furious to know that, even to serve his ends, it had been said that he ever admired Williams or would treat him otherwise than contemptuously. DuBeque was something of an adept at judging men. He had unerringly, one might almost say instinctively, made about the only possible appeal to Williams that could have been effective.

Williams said nothing. Perhaps he sensed the trap. It would not have been the first time that he walked into danger, fully suspecting all that was to come and apparently both unsuspicious and unprotected.

The nightly gaiety on the *Bebe* floated in drunken laughter and sportive cries to the boat that was slowly approaching, and shadows glided and drifted under the brilliantly lighted awning.

"Grogan?" called a heavy voice in a kind of subdued tone as the boat drew near.

"Yez, soir."

"Is DuBeque with you?"

"I'm here," DuBeque called loudly, "and so is Williams!"

Jackson said something loud but indistinct—something like an oath of surprize that struggled out in spite of himself.

Williams scrambled up the ladder swiftly as a monkey runs up a vine. Less rapidly, but helped by eagerness, DuBeque came after.

As Grogan put his hand to the ladder, the Samoan sailor spoke to him, and the mate stopped to listen in amazement.

"Williams?" said the loud-voiced Jackson.

Williams stopped, and his eyes flashed on Jackson's bearded face.

"You don't remember me?"

"No," said Williams gruffly, abruptly.

"Just as well," Jackson replied. "I never hold a grudge 'gainst a better man than me." Then, lowering his face, he added swiftly: "I don't know why you come. But look out!"

And Jackson turned with a cheerful greeting to give DuBeque a hand over the freeboard.

"Aye, Skipper, wan woird wid yez," Grogan called up.

"What is it, Grogan?" Jackson answered down.

"Oi'll bay r-right up," and Grogan came fast, and Jackson waited. But DuBeque and Williams had gone aft at once.

On the poop there was that noise which passes for gaiety. The seven or eight people who made up Willerby's guests were drinking and dancing. Existence on the *Bebe* would have been intolerable without the elixir of heady wine, not so much because they loved the wine—though they did that, too—as because of the insufferable *ennui* which only the inspiriting grape would cause to vanish.

DuBeque flung himself up the poop ladder, followed by Williams.

"Oh, W. W.," DuBeque called shrilly, elated, "here's Williams!"

For a moment those words seemed to smother the lips of all who heard: the quick silence of surprize, and no movement but the turning of heads and craning of necks. Then all edged nearer, gaping vulture-eyed to look upon the man who had almost become a legend in the South Seas.

He seemed to fill the part that rumor gave him: naked, fierce-eyed, short-bearded, with hair unevenly, carelessly cut short. And he stood firm-footed, legs apart, like a statue of bronze. Every muscle was tense, and the body, though not huge, or even big, was gnarled with the knotted muscles which were supple and smooth enough in his quieter moods.

He was hedged about. The women, low-waisted, in flimsy gowns of rainbowed silk, gaped tipsily, and the men in those grotesque attitudes of surprize and drunkenness stared through frog-lidded eyes and with mouths dropped.

Then Willerby, drunk but scarcely showing it, for like a barrel—the more solid when filled—he seemed physically impervious to wine in any quantity, roughly shoved his way through. And on his arm came Lania, forgetting the pose of tipsiness which was nightly assumed to account for the glasses she managed to pour overboard. Inside the circle she slipped from his arm and stepped back, crowding against those behind her, sensing danger, seeing it, since her eyes were clear, in that bronzed body that stood as if cast from molten metal to convey the great artist's idea of a dangerous man at bay.

Such refinement of perception was denied the fume-blurred eyes about her, for Du Beque was as drunk with pride as any other man with wine, and Jackson, who had quietly come up the ladder, was some distance away and at Williams' back.

Willerby swelled out, planted both hands on his hips and glared. The great moment was at hand. His sycophants were about him, waiting to listen.

But, before Willerby spoke, Williams did. He had been long ago, or long as time is valued in such a crisis, disillusioned. His voice was hard and cold.

"Where's that boy?"

Something resembling a shock was felt by those who stood around. Here was not a prisoner but a challenger!

Willerby raised his voice and said slowly, as insolently as he could—

"He is where you will be —— quick—in irons!" Then he continued, his voice quavering rhetorically, like a poor actor in a big scene, for, though he was not acting, he was speaking to the ears of the gallery gods on his poop as much as to Williams. He cursed the man, spoke of the yardarm and hemp, mentioned "white cannibals."

Only once did Williams take his gleaming eyes from Willerby's face. He shifted them for a barely preceptible instant as if to mark the place where DuBeque stood.

Willerby at length paused for breath, and Williams spoke again. It was as if he had not heard anything that had been said except the first sentence.

"In chains—why?"

Williams' questions were like grappling-hooks that jerked out answers by sheer force.

"Because he's a friend of yours! Why else do you suppose? I offered to make his fortune," Willerby went on in a slightly aggrieved voice as a missionary might say he had tried to save an unregenerate sinner, "but—" the wine perhaps was a little confusing to brain though not to his legs—"he told me to go to ——! And I'll send him there, and you with him!"

THEN IT happened as men who know of him say it always happened with Williams. As the hurricane strikes with scarcely a warning for those who are not watchful, Williams struck. He half wheeled; an arm flashed out; DuBeque was down unconscious for minutes and sickened for days to come.

Cries, shouts, screams. A roar of "kill him" from Willerby thrown to the ship at large but more or less directly at the burly form of Jackson. Yells from amidships. Women and men on the poop, fearful yet fascinated, screamed and jostled but did not turn away their faces, and some drunken hands half clutched at Williams as he bounded back from where DuBeque lay. Lania glided to one side. Only she and Williams were silent.

Williams glanced quickly to right and left; then he rushed straight into the huge fist of Willerby, taking a glancing blow on the neck and going on right up against him. A hand, steel-fingered, closed on Willerby's full throat, and a blow like the drive of a piston smashed into his face. He dropped.

A swift backward glance over his shoulder, and Williams wheeled to meet Jackson. But Jackson stopped. Jackson was no coward, but for one thing his heart was not in in the fight. He had plenty of sins on his head, but the gospel of fair-play was at least faintly ingrained within him. Besides, he had once been at grips with Williams; besides, still further, sailors were swarming from forecastle and amidships, and Grogan was coming up the poop ladder. Perhaps a little influence from all those things caused Jackson to stop. He began to talk about it and raised his hand in a kind of repressing, soothing gesture.

"We've got you, Williams. There's no use making more trouble. Here come——"

A half smile seemed to appear on Williams' lips. It may have been that he merely parted them in a strained way to suck his lungs full of air. Anyway, his eyes darted toward the top of poop ladder. Men were coming. Sheer numbers would pile him down.

He turned and lunged aft. Those in his way were too surprized and slow to get clear of his road, and a man and a woman were bowled over as ten-pins fly from the side of the ball. The little blonde crazily clutched out at him. With drunken luck her fingers slipped into the waistband of his trousers and tightened. Williams scarcely looked around: a back-handed blow and he was free and her beauty was spoiled for a month.

Then he leaped. Between taffrail and awning he dived and into the water.

A rush to the rail, shouting and pointing to where the phosphorescent water like a trail of fire-sparks marked his course.

"The boat—after him—kill him!" Willerby shouted hoarsely.

His throat was painfully wrenched. The windpipe seemed to have been almost jerked out, and, as he came unsteadily to his feet, he felt as if the ship were swinging and swaying in an oily sea.

"Tell that lugger to lower away, too," Willerby shouted again.

Voices screamed across the water toward the lugger that lay nearest. But Jackson had gone, and his was the only voice that would carry easily now that Willerby's was choked down to hoarseness, and the few

men on board the lugger were slow to get the order into their ears or through their heads.

The boat alongside was delayed a little in getting away. Rifles were fetched. Then it was found to be overcrowded, and some of the crew were sent up, leaving just enough to man the oars, excepting Jackson and Grogan. A white sailor steered.

Williams was a fast swimmer, but he had a hundred and fifty yards to go.

The boat swung out clear of the ship. Grogan and Jackson fired. The mark was not visible, only the phosphorescent wake of the swimmer, and the bullets striking the water—unless an almost spent ricochet—rarely leave even a passing flashing of water-sparks.

But, after they fired, the phosphorescent trail vanished; the water disturbed in swimming smoothed out.

"——, did we get him!" Jackson exclaimed anxiously.

"Oi shot hoigh," said Grogan, and both looked back a little apprehensively toward the *Bebe*, where cheering and compliments came from over the rail.

Then the cheering died, and shouts of "Look!" "There!" rose.

Again the water betrayed Williams after a long dive.

Jackson and Grogan shot again, and again Willams dived.

The lugger had lowered away.

"—— them!" said Jackson, glancing in the direction of the reinforcements as shooting began from that boat.

Williams was swimming fast, and his dives were long. But oars bent in the water, and the boats gained and gained. There was little chance of hitting him until the boats were almost on top of him, but they would be there before he could reach shore.

Then from the water and through his cupped hands as he treaded it, Williams shouted one word twice:

"Banoo! Banoo!"

The shore suddenly seemed alive with savages. Yells and howls, the fire of rifles, and presently the streaks of phosphorescent wakes as the canoes took to the water.

All Gopassa was on the beach. What Banoo and those with him had heard and seen when Williams left with DuBeque had rapidly been repeated, and all the Samoans, Tongans and Gopassans had come to the beach, where they had squatted and talked wonderingly, awaiting the dawn.

The pursuers were abruptly turned into the pursued, and the boats went about and made for the ships as fast as the frightened oarsmen could take them. Both boats fired and in earnest, but little harm could be done in the darkness.

The water was alive with canoes and as if all the fiends of hell were on it. Howls and yells of derision, taunts, were flung from the distance, the lessening distance, as the canoes swept on.

Then there broke from the *Bebe* a mighty flash and roar. The old brass cannon split the cup of heaven, and its echoes crashed amid cliffs and hills. It had never failed to intimidate natives, and there was momentarily a quiet and hush when its thundering echoes died away.

But shouts rose. The shouts were from Banoo, Nauma and Chief Ghorki calling their warriors home, for Williams had been picked up and had told them to go back to the beach. The shouts set the howling and yells loose again. The canoes turned beachward with much the reluctance that children show in leaving a street-fight, and cries of derision at the "white" boats for fleeing gave the natives a sense of victory.

"We're lucky," said Jackson in a throaty whisper to Grogan.

Grogan loosened a big, big sigh of relief and some thick profanity, too.

"The old man wouldn't believe it; so we might as well say nothin'."

"R-r-right," said Grogan as he put out his hand to steady himself against the side of the *Bebe* as the boat came alongside the ladder.

The Samoan sailor who had overheard Williams speak to Banoo had told Grogan, and Grogan had told Jackson, and they, being men who had often crossed Williams' trail, did not doubt that the sailor had been right when he claimed that Williams had said to the savages on the jetty—

"If I don't come back, blow up their ship at dawn!"

VII

WILLERBY held a council of war. A number of things were decided. He decided them. The others acquiesced, no matter what secret misgivings they may have had.

First, however, everybody wanted to know of DuBeque how on earth he had managed to get Hurricane Williams on board the *Bebe*.

For the moment DuBeque considered his broken jaw providential. Then some one suggested that he write it out. DuBeque was really very miserable. He did not feel like writing. One of the men, not entirely sober at the time, who claimed to have been a medical student in his youth, took DuBeque in hand, wrenched the jaw painfully in locating the break, swathed his head in bandages and, making a "straw" of oiled paper, let him suck down a drink.

Thereupon DuBeque wrote that he had gone ashore with the intention of putting a gun to Williams' head and ordering him to come along, but Williams had asked about the boy, Gilbert, and DuBeque had said he had been put in irons. Williams was angry about that, but DuBeque had said he had better tell his troubles to Willerby. Williams said he would go right on board and do that very thing, and DuBeque had replied that it was just as well because he, DuBeque, had come after him for the purpose of taking him back, without trouble if possible.

"What? Send but one man after me?" Williams had exclaimed.

"Why not? You are only one man," DuBeque had said.

"I'll go," said Williams.

Thus it all happened according to DuBeque.

That was an adroit and plausible explanation and seemed, in its essential features, true, but some of those who read it wondered what would have happened had DuBeque not been lucky enough to find Williams in a humor for coming, and a few were inclined to think that DuBeque had been braver than they suspected in taking the chance.

Then Willerby proceeded with his council of war.

Hurricane Williams was to be wiped off the face of the earth.

Somewhere near in one of the many bays and islets he had his ship. That must be captured. It would in a way serve as an indemnity for the trouble of wiping him off the earth.

The Gopassans must be stirred up to make trouble for him and his natives.

What shell and pearls he had obtained must be apprehended, as they were more or less anyhow the personal property of Willerby—or, at least, such was his feeling about them.

But all of those were incidental to the safe and sure move contemplated. A German gunboat, the *Prinz*, was some two hundred miles away at Shortland Island. Willerby knew the officers well, and they liked him—or, rather, had liked his wine and friends. With that far-sightedness that always characterizes the successful man of business, Willerby had foreseen that German influence would be strong enough to get a portion of the South Seas, and he wished to keep on the agreeable side of the Germans. In other words, he foresaw the coming agreement that would put some of the smaller islands and Bougainville under the Kaiser's protectorate.

The *Prinz* was now at Shortland making surveys of the little island, Morgusaia, with that methodical exactitude which Germans use in picking up the crums dropped by empire-grabbing nations. That exhaustive survey and charting would add weight to German claims in the South Seas. The capture of Williams would also be very agreeable to the *Prinz*, and the Germans would remember the favor Willerby had done them.

So it was decided that the next morning the larger lugger should take on fresh water, get aboard a few of the best sailors from the *Bebe* and slip down the coast to the *Prinz*.

The next morning it was raining—as usual.

Willerby and his friends lay late abed—as usual.

Grogan went on board the lugger as skipper and found her in need of refilling water-casks. One way to fill them was to go to the stream that flowed down to the bay from around the east side of the village. Another was to spread canvas and catch the rain.

Willerby awoke in an irritable mood. For one thing, his throat was more painful than ever. Instead of a glass of raw brandy poured down by way of letting his stomach know he was up, he was compelled to sip a hot toddy. He went on deck and found the rain. He was tired of rain. It seemed to him that not even Noah had endured so much rain. He was in the mood for ripping somebody up for something. But the poop had already been washed down and the brass work shined. There were no raffle about and everything looked shipshape.

Only a man who has looked for trouble

knows how irritating it is to find things in order. He looked out at the lugger. Why hadn't she got under weigh hours ago? And what on earth were they doing? Catching rain-water when a fresh water stream was in plain sight. He would show them, he would! He sent for his speaking-trumpet, but at the first shout through it he was reminded of Williams' fingers. That did nothing to relieve his temper.

He ordered the boat manned, and over to the lugger he went. His voice was rather hoarse, and it was not easy to speak, but he spoke.

Afraid of the natives, was Grogan? Well, in the name of all that was profane and much that was obscene, no niggers should ever have the satisfaction of knowing that Winston Willerby was afraid of them. Empty those casks that had already been filled, and overboard with the string of them. He would send a guard along. He would do better than that; he would send presents, too. Here was a chance to make friends with the natives.

To hear him tell of it, one would have thought that Grogan had been deliberately trying to cheat Winston Willerby of the opportunity of making friends with the natives, and, having more or less stumbled on to the idea, he began to make the filling of the kegs a great occasion.

So Willerby went back to the *Bebe*. Trade goods were broken out, bottles of cheap whisky brought up, rifles taken from their oiled rags.

A bottle of whisky in one hand and a rifle in the other: thus does the civilized white man ever meet the savage.

The native village was sleepy. It had been up the night before. Besides, it was raining.

AND at dawn, long before it was time to get up, particularly after a late vigil, Baraka came into the street, prancing and yowling. True, he had first gone to the hut of Williams to consult concerning affairs of magic, but Williams was gone. But the sun-maker had been effective the day before; so why not again? Baraka knew that his fees and promises of pay for sun would not be forthcoming if he did not make it stay out a reasonable length of time. True enough, he could easily have found a way to put the blame on the villagers themselves.

There were a thousand little infractions of tabu that could always be invoked as having spoiled the delicate charms of the devil-devil man. But Baraka, no matter what lack of faith he may have had in his own wizardry, put implicit confidence in the strange box that Williams had given him. So he went early into the street, swung his child's toy and made magic.

But it rained harder and harder.

Baraka was an old man, and he did not like the exertion. Moreover, he did not like the rain. It came in torrents.

He had committed himself so far that he could not stop without rendering his village a little skeptical. True, he could think up explanations, but explanations had to be convincing. And there were some of the Tongans, for instance, who did not believe in his magic. They made slighting remarks. Their influence was bad.

By eleven o'clock Baraka was pretty much disgusted. The rain swept down in sheets. It was a cold, chilling rain, too.

Then he saw the boats coming for shore and towing the water-casks. He was surprized. Other natives were surprized. Here was something to be watched and talked over. There was a flurry of excitement in the village. Were they coming to attack? Should they be attacked?

Neither Williams nor Banoo could be found. Nauma had been given no instructions concerning such an emergency, and by nature he was—as most Samoans are—peaceable without being cowardly. The Tongans are somewhat the same, too, but the Tongans are much more ready to fight than any other peaceable folk. Perhaps one of the reasons is that they do it exceedingly well. But the Gopassans were very much in doubt as to what to do, and moreover, Baraka, who held "peace" or "war" in any one of the gourds he cared to peep into, remembered the amazing wealth that had been showered on him the afternoon before by the generous Jackson.

In some respects the native is much like everybody else. His appetite for wealth, if he is at all avaricious, as devil-devil men always are, grows by what it is fed on. In some other respects the native is exceedingly peculiar. He buys children to raise as his own from the bushmen with whom he has an inveterate feud, yet bushmen and women come into the coastal marts and purchase salt and—if they eat it—fish.

In some places fish are regarded with as much repugnance by bushmen as human flesh by Europeans. If a party of natives board a trading-ship and one of them is killed while trying on his own initiative to murder the trader, the others are likely as not to go on bartering as if nothing had happened. Such incidents have occurred time and again. The unfortunate native aspired to win distinction and failed. It was his own lookout.

So it may be seen that their attitudes may not be judged by white men's logic. And in this respect it may not be amiss to here mention the obscure sentence tucked away in a little-known book that has contributed enormously to the success of the British Empire. In his Majesty's "Hints to Young Officers on Out Stations," it is specifically pointed out that natives are not "inferior" to white men but merely different.

Out of his long experience with natives, Willerby knew that they were just about as likely to greet him in a trading spirit as with clubs. Nobody had been killed the night before; there was nothing to have engendered a special feeling of bitterness. He rather expected that Williams would make trouble, but that was a chance he had to take if he wished to make trouble for Williams. And he had come prepared. In the day his white men were easily the superiors of the blacks as rifle-shots, and moreover he was in a way protected from the ship by the brass cannon, the roar of which carried much farther than its missile.

He did not head for the jetty but for the stream, and the boats came stern-on to shore and waited. For some minutes not a native appeared, though everybody knew the bush was full of them. Whether they were to announce their presence with a volley followed by howls or would come slipping forward timidly with coconuts and chickens for trade, was to be seen.

Presently a native edged into sight and stood waiting. He took that more or less risky method of finding out whether or not the white men would shoot at him. But Jackson stood up and greeted him with shouts of welcome and waved a bottle of whisky to show friendliness. Other natives came out. They were urged to come closer but were hesitant. They were unarmed, which meant that they had left their arms in the bush some ten or twenty feet away.

Jackson and Willerby climbed out and started wading up the beach. Behind them rifles were held just below the gunwales, ready in an instant to fire if needed.

Jackson and Willerby carried whisky, tobacco and fish-hooks. They came up to the sand and waited, holding out presents but insisting that the natives come for them. An animal-trainer requires less patience than a trader. The natives stood and looked, now would take a step forward, now retreat two, now squat, then stand, walk three or four paces nearer, stop, go backward and sit down.

Both white men swore feelingly, but they knew it was part of the game and so wore their friendliest smiles and never ceased gestures of welcome and generosity.

And it rained, rained, rained.

Then Baraka came out. He showed that he remembered Jackson, called to him and stood looking hungrily toward the bottle that Jackson carried.

"Hi, old boy, you fellow come catch him?" Jackson shouted.

"You no catch'em for shippy?" asked Baraka, inquiring whether or not Jackson was after labor recruits.

Baraka himself stood in no fear of being nabbed by a blackbirder. He was too old. But the others were much disturbed about that. And long ago both Baraka and Chief Ghorki had forgotten what Williams had said about there being trouble if the natives welcomed the *Bebe*.

"No, no," Jackson expostulated. "Him missionary shippy," waving a broad hand toward the *Bebe*. "No catch 'em black boys. Give whiky, temback—plenty whiky."

There was nothing incongruous to native minds in that. Gopassans knew of missionaries only by the vaguest reports. Good people, but foolish. Throughout the South Seas the missionaries are called foolish, even when influential. The Samoan word for missionary is "*afoola*." And missionaries were often—perhaps are yet—impersonated by blackbirders.

"Come catch him," Jackson finished.

"Him," "fellow," "plenty," "catch" and "quick," aided by pantomime, pretty well dispenses with all interpreters. The natives readily learn fragments of English; they will under pressure learn a little of the "*oui oui*" as they call French, but it is as if there were a taboo on all German words. They will not or can not learn them.

Baraka came forward carrying his child's rattle.

"Here, old boy, get a little o' this in you," said Jackson, opening the bottle and handing it to Baraka, who promptly drank long and deep, coughing and spluttering over the fiery liquor but delighted.

Other of the natives edged closer. More bottles were opened. Tobacco was distributed. Fish-hooks were handed around. A new supply of gifts was brought from the boat. The natives were thick about them.

"Come to shippy—any time—plenty whiky," said the generous Willerby as he passed out gifts with both hands. "But no Williams, no Williams boys. No. Bad!"

The unutterable "badness" of Williams was conveyed by Willerby's face and gestures rather than by his words.

"That a lie!" said a shrill voice, high-pitched in rage.

Jackson and Willerby looked around and saw a beautiful native girl, poised in anger, flashing her dark eyes upon them.

WILLERBY had been long in the tropics. He had seen hundreds, thousands of native girls and been susceptible to the charms of many. But at that moment he thought Uala the most beautiful of any he had ever seen. It was not true perhaps. Beauty, like other things that have superlatives, is comparative, and the lithe Samoan belle was resplendent among the flat-featured women of the Solomons—blacker of skin than the Polynesians and often, even when not in mourning, plastered with lime.

"Oh ho!" said Willerby.

"Whew!" Jackson commented.

"That a lie!" Uala repeated. "Misser Williams good man!"

"Full o' fire!" said Willerby admiringly.

He cast about for some present that would be agreeable to feminine vanity, but, when he looked up, Uala was gone. And she had disobeyed Nauma by going within speaking-distance of the *Bebe* men, but the story she carried to his ears somewhat palliated the offense: *Bebe* men were making Gopassans fool drunk and telling them Williams was bad man; much trouble would come sure, and she hoped yaws, cramps, bad dreams and sharks would get every last one of the Gopassans!

Willerby did not lose sight of his main purpose: to poison the natives with whisky and words; also to find out what he could about Williams, where his ship was and anything else of the kind that might be of value. But, familiar with native lore, he did not forget Uala when he added pay to generosity to get Baraka to make him a love-charm.

In no place in the world, as among the Solomons, are love or any other charms so effective. Let a native know that a witch-doctor has prepared a "ghost-shooter" against him, and that native will die. Let a woman see a love-charm, made with devil-devil magic, in the hands of a suitor, and, though she be the wife of a chief, she will yield. What the chief may afterward do to her, to her lover or, if a bold chief, to the wizard, is none of her concern. She would no more think of resisting the charm than of entering a *tambu* house. It simply is not done, and that is all there is to it.

Willerby's big red face beamed with pleasure as the natives grew drunk and noisy. He began to have hopes that Williams might be killed—scuppered—and toward that end gave broad hints, together with pledges of valuable friendship. He was well pleased with his work and made Baraka well pleased with his attentions. He made sport of the child's rattle, told him Williams had given him a "woman's toy" as an insult to the great devil-devil spirits and, truthfully enough, that it could not possibly affect the sun.

No. Willerby promised to give Baraka information concerning the weather from day to day and not to insult the devil-devil spirits by presents of a "woman's toy." And Baraka was to make a love-charm and give it to Uala, telling her that she could not resist the affection of Willerby. It was not usual for the wizard to have the suitor present the charm by proxy, but Willerby thought in this instance it was advisable. He did not care to remain until Baraka was sober enough to dabble with the magic from his gourds.

The casks were filled, the full supply of gifts distributed, and Willerby and his party returned to the ship.

As Willerby came on deck, flushed and pleased, he was met by Lania, who, clear-eyed and fresh, carefully dressed, was alone under the awning, waiting. He forgot all about the dusky Uala. Lania was incomparable, and she then showed a spirit, a vivacity which Willerby could not see was

forced but which had been markedly lacking in her for some time. If Lania had done as she wished, she would have gone to her couch and wept: she was torn and harassed as she had never been.

No woman is ever her real self—or displays it—except in intense anger. She wears robe over robe, herself unaware of the number that clothe her nakedness. Sometimes in the ecstasy of her first love she will very nearly bare her soul, but for her second and third, and after, she is disguised as an actress. And Lania was old in the ways of the world, and like all women who are—being more so than even the tender, wide-eyed maidens—she was heart-hungry. But, being cynical-minded, knowing men and women, too, she was, or thought she was, wholly disillusioned.

Disillusionment, often as not, merely substitutes one illusion for another. She hated Willerby; she hated Paul DuBequè; she hated all whom she knew. She thought it was love—deep, passionate, binding love—she wanted: love that would anguish her with intense delights. Women know and always have known what psychologists have only lately revealed to men: that delight is edged with pain. Women are the more passionate; and "passion," as the etymologists will tell all who ask means literally "a state of suffering." Lania wanted love that would hurt; "true love" it is called often by women who merely misname "novelty."

Women have so many various textured and colored vestments about their naked desires that not even in sincerest moments can they distinguish between what they try to conjure to them and what they really want.

Lania had been loved. She could not remember the times her face had been lighted by men whose passions for her burned them up. She had never loved Willerby. At times she liked him, yes. But he was an investment, and the pleasure got from his company was that of being his favorite, of wearing the black pearl earrings, of seeing other women envious.

But other men had struck fire from her. Clive Stanley—at any hour of night or day that name streaked across her brain, Lania felt something grip her flesh. Whatever else may have caused that sensation, there was fear, too. She had loved him with flaming passion—and grown tired in time. She always grew tired. But Clive Stanley—she had told him how she hated her husband; how he abused her, mistreated her. And Stanley, the strangest man she had ever known, brilliant, wealthy, bitter against the world, had swept her into his arms and carried her off.

But, before he carried her, he made sure that the husband would not follow. The dogs of Justice had followed instead. They caught Clive Stanley and hanged him for the murder of her husband. They had hanged him. There was no doubt of that. But she was still afraid of him, afraid that he was alive. There had been something about the man that precluded the idea of death touching him. It was all rather vague and superstitious, but it troubled her dreams.

Also there had been within easy remembrance Ballantyne, the son of the English lord: that affair was only a matter of days, tense and ending in violence. Always something violent seemed to attend her. He died. She fled.

THEN more recently there had been another man. She had tried to, rather than did, love him. She told herself that she loved; perhaps all of her life she would think that she really had: at least she was grateful to his memory. He had been from the world of gentlemen: not of titles and registered blood, but of—there is no other word to convey it—gentlemen. Though a man of some years and traveling, he had been innocent to believe that one can tell enough about a woman by looking at her, by talking to her, by taking kisses from her mouth and—all within a few weeks, to make her his wife.

Lania had married him—but not until Paul had assured her that there were enough reasons for believing him wealthy to take the chance. There were times when she really thought that she would have married him anyway. But Paul, like the devil's advocate with the book of her life under his arm, stood ever behind her ready to read her shame aloud and more destructively than the horns of Jericho shattered any wall with which love—"unprofitable" love—tried to hedge her about.

She had gone with her husband, pleased with his affection and joy rather than delighted by her own. The feeling of security

and comfort charmed her at first, but, like a sailor who has scarcely slept ashore after riding out a typhoon before he grows weary of land's solid footing, so she wished that life might be a little more lively than placid dinners, the quiet, reserved conversation of callers, the boredom of dull theaters. She knew she did not belong among the people to whom her husband had brought her—and that they knew it, no matter how little they might show it. And, too, she grew aweary of her husband's satisfaction in moon-gazing and the quiet words and gentleness of his love-making.

Paul grew more weary than she of conditions. He proposed a hideous relief. With combined fright and repugnance she had rebelled. But he had only to threaten from the book of her life, and she grew quiet. She did not agree; she simply became impassive—then it was more with that instinctive impulse to flee which possesses all persons who have seen a wrong done, taken even ever so passive a part in it, than with relief and desire to be gone, that she fled again to the vast seclusion of the South Seas and to Willerby.

Ever since her return she had been inwardly discontented, more so than ever before. Willerby was, so to speak, unbearable—and Paul DuBeque more so. She wished to be well rid of them all. There was no way out. Money was not lacking, but it was in Paul's hands. With foresighted prodigality he had seen to it that her wardrobe was all she wished, but there was nothing beyond that. Yet she was yet young, full of life's hot energies; also heart-hungry.

When she had first laid her eyes on Gilbert Lang, seen his clean, almost beautiful boyish face, the gentlemanly though youthful poise of him, vague things stirred within her. The harder she stared at him the less he seemed to resemble any one she had met. He seemed so far from wherever he belonged—so astray and alone among the men one met around the islands. Something about him fascinated her and was reminiscent of something—she could not remember what. She had not taken her eyes from his face, and the whole of that night she had scarcely taken her thoughts from him—and, when she did, it had been to think of Williams the berserker, who was evidently closely connected with the boy.

She feared that Paul DuBeque would not hesitate to stick a knife into the boy, and she knew very well that Willerby could readily find a way to have him dropped overboard. But Paul was very much concerned with his broken jaw, and Willerby, too, at the moment had other matters on his mind.

The next morning Paul stayed in bed. Most of the others did, too. They sipped coffee and rum on awakening and dozed off again. Anything to put in the time, to kill it. When they awoke again, they had another drink, and, when well saturated with rum, they would get up. Lania, bored as any, but more far-sighted, endured the intolerable confinement of ship life without recourse to stimulants in any such quantities. She arose to a bath and a few minutes of deep breathing, scrutinized her face for wrinkles and plucked at the flesh under her chin to see how distant was that nightmare of the fleshy throat. She wasted as much time in one way or another as the others did in bed.

When she came on deck, Willerby and his boats had gone ashore. There were no sailors left but the white boatswain and two or three natives to man the brass cannon in case it was needed. As usual, there was nothing to do. There were some Minerva Press novels scattered about, a few paper-backed French stories, but Lania did not care for reading. Fiction bored her, and anything else was not always intelligible. Also as usual it was raining.

Lania stood about for some minutes; then she hastened for the steward.

Where, she asked carelessly as one might inquire for anything out of idle curiosity, was that boy?

He was in one of the storerooms, irons on his feet. Yes, the steward had the key. Why had he been put there? The steward did not know. Grogan had told him the boy was to be kept there and the door was to be kept locked. Certainly she could see him.

The steward liked Lania. Most men did. She was beautiful.

WHEN Lania stood in the opened door, Gilbert Lang sat on the deck, his head dejectedly propped against his hands. About him were boxes and barrels. He had been given nothing to break the hardness of the deck.

He did not look up until he heard her

voice saying to the steward that she would be all right and that she would lock the door when she left.

Gilbert Lang remembered her. She was the sort of a woman that is always remembered: black-haired, black-eyed, a slender oval face, long lashes and red lips; also what might be called a multitude of hair, black, glossy and fine. Vain as they are of the glory, women will never realize fully until they begin clipping it how much of their feminine distinction is due to their hair. There never was, there never could be, a clipped-headed sorceress. Lania's hair, had she worn it down, would have hung in massive braids, and it was only by adroit and studied arrangement that she escaped a top-heavy appearance and made her hair literally a crowning glory.

Gilbert Lang with some difficulty got to his feet.

"You poor boy!" she said, unaffectedly.

"What are they going to do with me?"

"I don't know. They are brutes!" She was not posing.

"Have they caught Mr. Williams?"

"No, hardly! He—" she stopped. Then gazing at him intently—"Would you do what Willerby asked if he would turn you loose?"

He shook his head slowly, and he looked at her with something of disappointment in his eyes, as much as to say—

"That is why you came!"

"You wouldn't? Not if they were going to hurt you?"

"No."

"You said he was no friend of yours. You said it two or three times."

"He isn't what could be called a friend. He hardly ever spoke to me. And some way he seemed always angry. It made me very uncomfortable, though I suppose it is only his manner. He hates white men, and I am beginning to understand why!"

"Did he hate you?" she asked.

"I don't know. He seemed to at times. I suppose he does—now."

Gilbert Lang was thinking of how Williams had glared at him when he came upon Uala and him under the palms.

"Didn't any one tell you what happened last night?"

"What happened? No. I didn't hear anything. Did they get him?"

Then Lania told of how Williams had come on board the *Bebe*—and left.

"He must be a wonder!" Gilbert Lang exclaimed admiringly, for Lania had not in any way minimized Williams' blows.

"Men call him a hurricane. How did you come to be with him, Mr. Gilbert?"

"Mr. Lang," he corrected. "Gilbert Lang."

Then it was as if lightning had struck Lania. By the flash of the bolt that stunned her she saw what it was about Gilbert Lang that had stirred vague things within her. They were no longer vague. The heart-hungriness that had seemed to pull her toward him was rather the hungriness and memory of his brother, Frank Lang. This boy was her brother by law, and the name of Gilbert, as "that kid brother of mine," had often been on Frank's lips.

There was scarcely a family resemblance, for Gilbert was the more delicate, but there was much suggestive of his mother. Lania had sought him out largely through restlessness and not through passion, but within her was the feeling that she could love him. Except for a certain untarnished youth, it was not because of Gilbert Lang's personality, but because of her own discontent.

He saw that she was very much agitated, and he asked what was the matter.

Hers was a quick brain:

"I overheard Willerby and Paul say they would have to put Lang out of the way. Kill him. I didn't know that was your name! I thought it was Gilbert. Oh, I won't let them kill you! I won't!"

Fire flashed in Lania's eyes; her body stiffened. She meant it. Of course, she had overheard nothing of the kind, but, while she had swiftly fabricated that information to cover her own agitation, she nevertheless knew that either Paul DuBeque or Winston Willerby would readily enough kill the boy. But that did not begin to explain her attitude. There was that deep, deep feeling of gratitude, amounting to a tenderness more pervading than any emotion she had ever called "love," for Gilbert Lang's brother. He had been a gentleman, and, though his presence was sometimes wearisome, the memory of him, his devotion, courtesy, worshipful innocence, was dear to her.

In retrospect she appreciated him, his home, his father and mother, and in her retrospective bitterness at DuBeque for

having robbed her of those things—much more precious viewed from the tedious deck of the *Bebe* than when they had been within fingers' reach—she neglected to remember, utterly forgot and would have denied, that she had been guiltily acquiescent in the murder. True, there had been the book of her life from which DuBeque threatened to read, but, had she loved Frank Lang or been another kind of woman, she would have dared the harpies, given herself over to be plucked by scandal and cast out and have saved him from the poison which DuBeque—her cousin, not her brother as had been pretended under the name of Brown—had managed to procure against emergency from an old devil-doctor of the Santa Cruzians—the most artful of South Sea poisoners.

It did not at once occur to her why Gilbert Lang was in the South Seas. The thing that did bear in upon her was that this boy should not be harmed. Without at all reasoning the matter out—women seldom reason anything out—she flamed up with resolution. It was as if in a vague, chaotic way she would try to atone for the wrong done his brother. But she had no clear idea of doing that; she did not even think of it. Perhaps it might be said that she felt it.

What women feel and what they think do not necessarily have a logical connection. The enigmatic quality in them, intuition, that so baffles the male is like the magic carpets of Arabian wizards and carries them instantly from point to point.

"Why," asked Gilbert Lang simply but convinced, "should they want to kill me?"

"Because they are that kind of men. You hit Paul. That is reason enough for him. And that Paul wants to do it is reason enough for Willerby." And she very nearly voiced the wish, which was sincere, that Williams had killed both!

"But look how they treated me!"

"Can you swim?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"I don't know how you can get away then."

"But may not Williams make them give me up? I feel awfully for saying I was no friend of his and——"

"He can do nothing. If he comes anywhere near the ship, they will kill him."

"But surely men don't commit murder like that? Isn't there any law? Nothing?" It was of himself as much as Williams that he was thinking.

"The Solomons are not like Philadelphia, Gilbert Lang! War-ships make the laws—and Willerby tells the officers what is right and what is wrong, and he usually keeps them so drunk that they believe him!"

"How did you know I came from Philadelphia?" he exclaimed.

It was a perilous slip, but she did not hesitate:

"Williams said so. I don't remember just how, but he mentioned it in some way."

"I don't think I ever told him where my home——"

"You must have," she said definitely. "Listen, I am going to bring you a revolver. If anybody tries to hurt you, shoot! I'll see if it can be arranged so you can get away."

GILBERT LANG did not know what to say. He was in the position of believing her while feeling it was unbelievable that anybody should wish to kill him. He was grateful to her but surprized at her intensity: she was a stranger to him, yet there was a certain indefinable intimacy about her, a kind of intimate familiarity, which, combined with her peculiarly vivid beauty, added something to his feeling of depression. Gilbert Lang was not cast in the heroic mold; whatever courage he may have had was not the sort that made him a man of easy adventures, and he had none of the facile gallantry that carries men along dashingly with strange women.

He thanked her, but she seemed scarcely to hear him. She went away and came back with a revolver, loaded. Lania gave it to him, urging him not to hesitate in using it.

She had some difficulty in not venturing into dangerous questions. It flashed on her as strange that Gilbert Lang should be in the South Seas, yet she rejected the idea that he had come to search her out. First, she did not think it likely that she and DuBeque had been tracked westward, and also, being unable to imagine how little Gilbert Lang had known of the South Seas, she could not believe that he had come into them, their myriad islands and great distances, to look for her and DuBeque.

She did ask why a boy such as he was there.

Gilbert Lang answered evasively even as he looked at her, wanting to say something of how his ironed ankles and the danger from Willerby seemed merely the persistence of the tragedy that had come on his family.

And she in turn could hardly repress the name of "Alice Brown," thinking of how she could pretend to have known "Miss Brown" and to have remembered "Miss Brown's" mentioning a Philadelphian family of Langs. But common sense restrained the name.

She left after urging him again not to hesitate to use the revolver if he saw he was in danger. Nothing had been said that let him know DuBeque was in any way tied to her by blood; nothing that had revealed to him her name. She seemed a very wonderful woman. But, in thinking of her, he thought of Uala, and to think of the two at once was in a degree to compare them, not critically, not appraisingly but as one might set side by side to view at once some piece of earthwork out of Tuscany and porcelain out of Limoges. He flushed at remembrance of Uala, yet the charm of her was evoked by the flush.

When Lania had left him, she went back to the poop to await the return of Willerby. She was very agitated and perturbed, knowing scarcely what to do—in fact, scarcely knowing what to hope for. Then the devil thrust a thought into her brain that thrilled and frightened: supposing Paul DuBeque were artfully egged on to remember his threat against the boy and the boy killed him! It would be the fate he deserved, and she would be rid of DuBeque's spectral, sinister shadow. She did not decide upon it but nursed the thought tentatively, and it came to seem less revolting.

She soon regarded it as less of her own planning than that of Nemesis, of justice. Those seeking desired ends through violence always manage with more or less sincerity to put the full responsibility to God, Destiny or the abstraction, Justice. It is as if something innate within most of mankind shrinks from murder, until—as savages with their own hands make monstrous images which can only be satisfied with an altar-heap of dripping heads—they have created some idea that not only sanctions the killing but often commands it: vengeance, by the avenger, anyway, is always looked upon as an unmasked headsman who wears the insignia of Justice.

Lania never gave such matters as these even a trace of thought, but by the same psychological processes just mentioned she arrived at the feeling that it would be right for DuBeque to die by the hand of Gilbert Lang.

And so almost resolved, thrilled, appearing vivacious, but agitated, she stood awaiting the coming of Willerby.

And he came proud and boastful. He gloated over the way he had turned Gopassa into a drunken village, seduced Baraka into dislike for Williams and prepared what he thought would be death-dealing trouble for the alien Samoans and Tongans.

TO BE CONTINUED

AGENT ANDY

BY

RUSSELL A. BOGGS

Author of "The Cool Hand," "Dan Kurrie's Inning," etc.

CARRICK, superintendent of the Northern Division of the R. S. & T. railroad, had the reputation of being an obstinate man, one difficult to persuade from any view but his own, and it was said of him that he never forgot anything, good or bad. This being the case, it is not strange that he should keep in mind the first dereliction of Andy Peck, agent at Belham.

It was in the Spring of the year 1916 that Superintendent Carrick started out with the general manager and several general superintendents and a number of other officials of high and low degree on a trip of inspection. They came to Belham on their special train and found the station locked and the agent absent. They waited and fussed around for the better part of ten minutes, the general manager and the other high officials casting coldly questioning glances at the fuming Carrick and inquiring of one another—in distantly ominous voices that they made certain the luckless superintendent would hear—what sort of a doings was this? But no agent came, and the inspection of the Belham station was abandoned. The special rolled away with its indignant passengers.

You may be sure that a subsequent investigation came. Oh, yes! And this investigation brought out the fact that, while the high and mighty members of the inspection party were wasting a precious ten minutes in vain waiting for Andy Peck to come and let them in so they could have a look-see, said Andy was calmly stretched out on the chair in a barber-shop several minutes walk distant from the depot, receiving certain tonsorial attentions.

"You kept us waiting for that!" stormed Carrick. "Kept us waiting while you got a shave and a hair-cut!"

"And a shampoo," corrected young Andy with proper humility.

His face was perfectly sober, though inwardly he was feeling somehow mighty pleased with himself. For this, you must understand, was before he had met Ina, the miller's daughter, and learned responsibility.

"It's the most outrageous thing I ever heard of!" gasped the superintendent, glaring.

"Business was slack," murmured the wicked Andy. "And I didn't know you were coming." He sighed. "If you'd only sent me word."

Carrick glared some more. Send word, indeed—and spoil the very purpose of the inspection.

"We'll see!" he cried and pounded the top of the desk. "We'll lay you off for thirty days for this offense! And mind this: if ever again I find you absent from your office when you should be on duty, I'll discharge you completely!"

So Andy got his thirty days. But he didn't care—enjoyed the enforced vacation,

in fact. In those thirty days he got properly acquainted with the folks of Belham town—to which he had but shortly come. And, best of all, he met black-eyed Ina, daughter of Duncan, the miller.

The more he met Ina the more Andy became convinced that this Belham job was just the thing for him. And, as the days passed, Ina came to agree with him. So, by the time Summer had gone and early Fall had come, things between them were pretty well settled.

"There's Lane's little bungalow," he said one evening. "It'll be empty the first of November."

"Well—" she hesitated, coloring prettily.

"Set the day," he insisted.

"Well—yes, all right!" She placed her hand on his arm. "Just give me a day or two to decide, Andy," she said—just like a woman.

BUT the very next afternoon Superintendent Carrick dropped off a slowly moving freight as it passed Belham depot. He tried the waiting-room door; it was unlocked, and he entered. He tried the office door; it was locked.

He rattled the knob of the office door vigorously. No response. He peered in through the glass of the closed ticket window. No one in sight. He went outside and peered through the front office window, where he had a complete view of the interior. No person was within.

"Ah, ha!" said Carrick and went back into the silent waiting-room and seated himself.

A half-hour passed. No agent. Forty-five minutes. Still no agent. The superintendent rose, stumped out of the building and started to walk down the track.

On a short siding just west of the station stood six camp-cars, the quarters of the members of the steel gang, at present laying steel rail near Belham, and all colored—brought from the South during the past Summer. As Carrick was passing one of the cars, he heard voices speaking behind its closed door. He paused.

"I don' know, Mistuh Agent," said one speaker. " 'Steamboat,' he say——"

"Don't you listen to Steamboat," cut in the unmistakable voice of Agent Andy Peck. "You listen to me. I'm telling you the truth."

Carrick waited for no more. He shoved that door open with a bang. Seated on the edge of a wooden bunk were two colored men—one with a bandaged foot, the other with a wrapped-up hand. On a soap-box opposite them sat Andy.

"Is this where you spend your time now?" asked Carrick grimly.

The agent looked a little dismayed.

"I can explain—" he began.

"Come out here," interrupted the superintendent. "I've something to say to you."

The agent descended from the car and followed Carrick. Out of earshot of the big-eyed colored men the superintendent stopped and faced Peck.

"You remember what I told you last Spring," he said firmly to the agent. "You've been absent from your office for at least forty-five minutes this afternoon. I know, because I was at the station waiting. You're done—fired."

"But you ought to let me explain," remonstrated Andy. "I was working for the interests of the R. S. & T. when I was in that camp-car just now."

"Likely!" scoffed Carrick.

Peck flushed.

"Yes, sir," he affirmed steadily. "These steel gang boys are threatening to quit and go back South. They're worrying about the coming Winter up North here—afraid, if they stay, they'll freeze. One of the gang is egging the others to go—a fellow they call Steamboat Jackson. I've been trying to queer his efforts and persuade them to stay; that's why I was talking to those two men when you came."

Carrick listened incredulously until Andy finished his tale.

"Bosh!" he snapped.

"It's the truth," declared Andy.

He kept his mind fixed on Ina and thus was able to choke back the hot words that surged to his lips.

"No matter," said Carrick shortly. "I don't believe they'll leave—and, even if they should, it's none of your affair. Your business was to stay in your office and take care of things there. Anyhow, you're done. I'll have a man here in a couple of days to relieve you."

Andy saw it was useless to talk any further to the headstrong superintendent.

"Very good," he said.

Turning on his heel, he walked toward the depot.

II

IT WAS that very Thursday evening that Track Supervisor Quinn, of the maintenance-of-way department, entered the superintendent's office at Wharton, division headquarters, twenty miles east of Belham.

"I don't know," said Quinn to Carrick abruptly, "but I'm afraid our colored steel gang is not going to stick with us. Now that there's a nip of frost in these Fall mornings, they're getting restless; their thoughts are turning back to their sunny South."

Carrick looked up quickly. Recollection of what Agent Peck had said that afternoon flashed through his head.

"You think so?" he said, frowning.

"Yes," returned Quinn. "They've an exaggerated idea of the severity of our Northern Winter. That's one trouble. And another is that they're continually being stirred up by the more shiftless, restless spirits among them—by one man named Steamboat, especially. If we only could discreetly eliminate both troubles!"

More confirmation of what Peck had said. Carrick's face grew more dour. But no difference, he decided; Relief Agent Manott had already been instructed to relieve Peck the coming Monday. And, anyway, these agents ought to learn their place; Peck had not been called on to take a hand with the steel gang.

"That agent at Belham was saying something along the same line," he observed aloud, however.

"Andy Peck," said Quinn. "Yes, he knows. Good boy; been trying to keep 'em straight. It will be little less than a calamity for us if we can't hold them," he went on. "Now that practically all the foreigners have gone back to the old countries to get in the big mix-up over there—and even those who didn't have entered the mills and factories—our last reserve, our last hope, is the colored labor from the South. You've said yourself that we absolutely must get this new rail laid to stand the heavy traffic that's coming this Winter and next Spring. The old steel that we're replacing is done for, as you know. If we should be compelled to try to make it stand up under the demand that will be made upon it, we're going to be left in a sad state."

Carrick knew that this was sober truth. But he refused to be convinced that the steel gang situation was serious.

"It's probably just talk," he said. "I don't believe they'll actually go."

"I'm afraid of it," persisted Quinn. "However, I believe that, if we could eliminate the uneasy element that keeps the others in a state of unrest, we could calm their fears about the coming cold weather. But the eliminating would have to be done in a most diplomatic manner. The whole gang is at the skittish point, ready to jump at the first move that looks suspicious to them. If we fire one and he goes, the entire crowd goes. That's the way I figure it."

"Well," said Carrick, "what are you going to do about it?" It was plain that he still was skeptical about the supervisor's fears.

"I'm stumped," said Quinn glumly. "I'm worried sick about the whole business." He walked toward the door. "And I'm expecting there'll be some sort of a crisis within the next few days, too."

"Oh, bother!" said Carrick. "It's probably nothing. But, if you really are alarmed, do whatever you think best."

"I would," said Quinn, "if I only knew what was best. I'm trying to think up something."

He went out.

III

THE steel gang was holding forth down at the far edge of the station platform, gathered in a ring at the edge of the circle of light made by the single platform lamp there.

The early October moon tipped the eastern hills. The evening still was warm after the balmy windless day. By morning the colored men might be shivering under Jack Frost's caress, but tonight their hearts were light. The reason was simple. The coming Saturday, less than forty-eight hours away, would be pay-day. So now, this Thursday evening, by turns they clogged, buck-and-winging with fantastic and grotesque shufflings of the feet, the onlookers applauding with boisterously enthusiastic cries. At frequent intervals their voices rose in song—wonderfully harmonious, vibrate with natural melody.

Andy Peck, having nothing much to do just then but wait until the last evening passenger-train, No. 73, should arrive, stood

in the waiting-room doorway and for a time dispiritedly watched the merrymaking down at the far end of the freight house. He certainly was feeling blue.

AFTER supper he had stopped in at Duncan's before returning to the station. Ina had met him at the door. By his expression she immediately perceived that he brought bad news.

"Our wedding is off—for a while!" he blurted out. "I've been fired."

"Oh, Andy!" she faltered. "How? Why?"

Into her sympathetic ears he quickly poured his sad tale.

"The nasty old thing!" she said indignantly when he had finished. "I'd just like to get my fingers in his hair a minute; I'd shake some sense into him!"

It is indicative of Andy's extreme misery that he did not even smile at that—the superintendent's crown being so devoid of hair that it would have been impossible to get anything approximating a grasp of it.

"I was looking at Lane's bungalow, too," she continued. "Just this afternoon. It's—it's the dearest little house." She put her face close to his. "Couldn't we—couldn't we be married anyway, Andy?"

"We could," he replied, "but we won't. Not till I get a job."

"You could find one afterward," she said.

"I'll find one first," he had answered, and forthwith he had torn himself away.

For, despite his firmness, he felt himself weakening, and that, he felt, was a poor thing to do under the circumstances.

IN CONSEQUENCE Andy now brooded in the doorway of the station while he contemplated the lively steel gang. Presently he strolled down toward them, found a spike keg lying near the side of the freight house, up-ended it and sat down just outside the circle of light. One "Memphis Joe" was performing at the time. Directly Memphis—as he was called for short—cut a final figure in his clog and concluded his whirl.

" 'Nough!" he cried and dropped down against the freight house, close to where Andy sat.

Cries now arose for "Steamboat! Steamboat!" Faces were turned expectantly toward the side of the ring directly opposite the agent.

"Git in, Steamboat! Hit 'er up!"

"Shake dem feet, Steamboat!"

"Show us-all whut you got!"

But Steamboat Jackson, burly and tall and extremely black, morosely shook his head. Of all the crowd he was the single man—besides Andy—who appeared downhearted.

"No, suh!" he said, a trace of sullenness in his voice.

"Come on, Steamboat! Be a spoht!"

"No, suh!" reiterated Steamboat. "Don' bother me!"

Thereupon, perceiving that Steamboat was not to be moved, another aspirant for acclaim stepped to the center. Agent Andy leaned over toward Memphis Joe.

"What's the matter with Steamboat, Memphis?"

"Don' know, Mistuh Agent. Steamboat, he's had a grouch on all day. He didn' go out with the gang—didn' help lay no rail a-tall today."

"Sore at the foreman?"

Memphis Joe shook his head.

"No, I don' think so. Don' know jest whut 'tis."

"Maybe he's worrying about the coming cold weather," suggested Andy. "Maybe he wants to travel South?"

"That might be," agreed Memphis. "I heard him say no col' weather wasn't goin' ketch him up here. He's blowed that, w'en he did go South ag'in, he's goin' well-heeled—with his pockets full 'nough to keep him 'thout workin' till nex' Spring."

"And he hasn't got the money yet, eh?"

"No, suh! Jest this minute I bet Steamboat ain't got 'nough in his jeans to take him half-way back to Vicksburg, whar he come from."

"Well, day after tomorrow is pay-day," observed Andy. "He'll get some then."

"He'll draw 'bout the same as me for the las' two weeks," replied Memphis. " 'Bout forty dollars. An' forty dollars ain't goin' keep no man over Winter."

"That's right," assented Peck. "So then, if Steamboat goes back soon, it looks like his blow was no good?"

"Sure do! An' say, Boss, I hadn' thought of it much before, but I'll bet you've done hit it! I'll bet that's whut is puttin' Steamboat in sech a stedy. He wants that money so's he kin hole up this Winter down in Vicksburg—an' he ain't got it! An', whut's mo', he ain't li'ble to git it 'fore col'

weather comes, an', w'en col' weather does come, he don' want to be here!"

"I understand Steamboat wants the rest of you boys to go back with him?" said Andy abruptly.

Memphis shifted uneasily.

"I've heerd some talk," he admitted. "Steamboat's been tellin' stuff."

"He's talking through his hat," said Andy. And then, as Memphis kept silent, he added, "They tell me Steamboat is a bad actor when he gets going good?"

Memphis cast a wary glance at the sullen, glum Steamboat.

" 'Deed, Mistuh Agent, that's right! W'en Steamboat starts to spread hisself, other folks jest sort o' ease back! They do if they's wise."

No. 73's whistle sounded far up the track. Andy Peck rose from his keg.

"Well, it looks like hard luck for Steamboat; I guess he'll have to stay here or else go without his roll."

Memphis Joe also got up. He dropped his voice carefully.

"It does," he agreed. "But I b'lieve he's goin'—roll or no roll. I'se only hopin', though, that, if he does go, he goes 'thout raisin' no ruckus like he done las' pay-day. If he does start a ruckus, it's dead sure all the rest of us colored boys goin' to leave whether we was aimin' to or not."

No. 73's deep whistle drowned out any reply Andy might have attempted. He hurried toward his baggage truck.

IV

ON FRIDAY afternoon Steamboat Jackson, sprawled in the sunshine just around a protected corner of the depot building, heard a rapid *put-put* up the tracks. A quick glance in that direction revealed to him that the sound was made by Supervisor Quinn's motor speeder as it swiftly drew nearer the station. Steamboat quickly decided it might be best not to let the supervisor see him lying around the depot instead of being out laying rails with the rest of the steel gang. Not that Steamboat cared much—but it would save useless talk.

At once the colored man rose and slunk around to the back of the depot building, it being too late for him to regain the shelter of the string of camp-cars that the steel gang used. He paused near the rear window of the agent's little office.

The supervisor's speeder drew up to the station and stopped. Stepping off, Quinn lifted the wheels from the rails and rolled the speeder back from the tracks. Then he entered the station, going into the office where Andy Peck sat at his desk, completing his daily accounts. As the afternoon was rather warm, the agent had slightly raised the rear office window for ventilation. The voices of Peck and Quinn carried out clearly to the squatting Steamboat.

"Hello, Andy!" said Quinn. "How're things today?"

"Poor," responded the agent. "Rotten!"

This was so different from the usually blithe Andy's speech that the supervisor stared in surprize.

"Why?" he exclaimed. "What's the trouble?"

"Been canned," jerked out Andy. "Yesterday—by the right honorable Mr. Carrick. Am waiting now for the relief man; expect he'll get here about Monday."

"Tell me about it," pressed Quinn.

Peck did. When he was through, the supervisor whistled softly.

"The dickens!" he said. He was silent a moment. "Of course, I can't say much—but you know how I feel."

"Thanks," replied Andy. "But let's talk about something else. What's on your own mind today?"

"Trouble, too," said Quinn. "Nothing but trouble. I'm trying to fix a way to get these steel gangers to stick with us. Foreman Walsh tells me there's open talk among the men that most of them are going to leave right after they get their pay tomorrow. It's that Steamboat fellow who's prodding them to it."

"I know they're nervous," said Andy. "As I told the old man yesterday, I was down in that camp-car doing a little propaganda stuff. But he couldn't see it."

"I understand," said Quinn warmly. "I appreciate what you've done, even if he doesn't." He paused. "If we could only eliminate that Steamboat without scaring the others off, I believe we could hold 'em. Just now it looks as if his influence over them was great enough to get them to do what he wants. But, if we could get rid of him in the right way or could overcome his influence in some manner, I believe they'd stay here."

"Have you anything in mind?"

"Oh, I have a little scheme," answered Quinn, "but I'll admit I have my doubts of its success. Anyway, that's my chief reason for coming to see you today."

"Let's hear about it," urged Andy.

"It's just this. We're going to try a little psychology on the steel gangers—going to pay them in cash tomorrow instead of with the usual checks. A bunch of bills in a colored man's hand looks a lot bigger to him than a little slip of paper, even if the paper is worth as much."

"I see," said Peck. "You're figuring that, when a man sees all that ready cash in his fist and realizes that he can get as much more every two weeks if he stays on the job, he's not going to be so ready to leave right off."

"Exactly," stated the supervisor. "You can see for yourself, though, that it's not much to base our hopes on. But we're going to give it a trial."

"How you going to pay them?" asked Andy.

"That's where you come in," answered Quinn. "We're going to send a special pay-roll out to you and let you do it."

"But how about the money?" questioned Andy. "Where's it to come from?"

At this question the attentive Steamboat pricked up his ears.

"That'll come with the pay-roll sheets," replied Quinn. His words reached Steamboat distinctly. "Sheets and money will be done up in a package and will reach you tonight on No. 73. That'll give you a chance to go over it and get things lined up before the men call tomorrow morning. The money will be in bills—about three thousand dollars."

A sort of gentle sigh escaped Steamboat. Three thousand dollars! Many, many times the amount that would keep him in comfort, in luxury, over Winter. Tomorrow he'd draw around forty dollars. That forty dollars, plus seven dollars and thirty cents—the latter amount almost wholly the result of a recent lucky session at craps—represented his total assets. Steamboat sighed deeply again. Three thousand dollars! He hearkened once more to the conversation within the office.

"All right," Agent Peck was saying. "Let it come. I'll do my best—even though the old man has given me the can. I haven't any safe here, though, to keep the money in overnight. And there's no bank in town."

"Take it home with you?"

"No," objected Andy. "That'd throw me responsible if the stuff should disappear."

There was silence for a moment. Then Quinn spoke:

"In that case, then, I expect the only thing to do will be to conceal it some place here in the office. It ought to be safe enough, especially as no one else needs to know it's here."

"It ought to be," assented Andy. "Anyway, that's what I'll have to do."

"Sure, it'll be all right," said Quinn. He walked toward the door. "Well, I'll have to be moving along. Hasn't been any trouble since last pay-day, has there? Men behaving?"

"No; no trouble since," replied Andy. "The colored boys are doing as well as could be expected, I guess."

"Just what did happen last time?" asked Quinn. "I never did hear precisely, and I've been wanting to ask you. Trouble with the townfolk, wasn't it?"

"Yes. A few of the steel gangers got a little too much gin and made some excitement up-town. I wasn't there myself, but the next day I heard there'd been threats made. Some of the white folks were for coming down here and cleaning out the camp-cars. I heard they claimed they'd do it if the colored men started anything again."

"That's the deuce of it—when they get a little booze!" said Quinn. "Well, let's trust they'll behave. But, if anything should break loose, you wire to headquarters, and we'll get some of our railroad cops out here quick. A man can't fool with that sort of thing. No telling."

"All right," responded Andy. "But I guess there's not much danger. Mostly hot air, I expect."

"Hope so," said the supervisor. "But don't take any chances. So long. I'll drop in tomorrow and see how things are working out."

V

IT WAS shortly after dark Friday evening when Andy Peck stepped around the end of the station to get the baggage truck there and pull it out to the front, ready for No. 73's arrival. Loud

laughter and singing came from most of the camp-cars that stood on the siding west of the station. The car that stood nearest to the depot was that wherein Steamboat Jackson and some of his special cronies abode. Andy paused and listened for a few moments. From this last car came the loudest of the sounds—and the sounds were neither those of laughter nor singing. High, declamatory voices sounded there, and the words that floated out were plentifully besprinkled with oaths.

A voice came from the rear corner of the station, close at hand.

"Mistuh Agent!"

"Yes?" answered Andy. The voice, though low-pitched, was unmistakably that of Memphis Joe. "What is it, Memphis?"

"Step over close here, please. I don' want none them other steel gangers see me talkin' to you."

Wondering, Andy moved over into the gloom of the corner.

"What's the matter, Memphis?"

"Mistuh Agent, I don' like the way that Steamboat man is actin'!" Memphis spoke with swift earnestness. "He's done got sev'ral bottles gin some'eres, an' he's been settin' up the drinks to that crowd of his in his camp-car. They all cert'nly been talkin' high an' free this las' hour or so. I been listenin'."

"I was trying to hear them myself just now," said Peck. "What they talking about, Memphis—you know?"

"They's aimin' to make big trouble, Mistuh Agent—an' that's a fact! Some folks, white an' colored, bound to git hurt if Steamboat's crowd do whut they's blowin'!"

"And what's next?"

"Whut I tol' you las' night—like Steamboat an' his gang done up at Scanlon's s'loon las' pay-day. They's blowin' they's goin' back up there tonight an' make the townfolks stan' round!"

"You don't say!" exclaimed Andy. "But do you think they'll really try it?"

Memphis spoke with conviction.

"They got lot o' gin in 'em," he declared. "An' some colored folks li'ble do most anything w'en they gits the booze. They'll try it; that's cert'n!"

"That's bad!" said Andy, frowning in the darkness.

"Yes, suh!" affirmed Memphis. "Goin' make big trouble for lot o' us colored folks whut don' want no trouble. W'en Steamboat an' his crowd goes up-town, folks there most likely'll chase 'em back down here to the camp-cars. Then there'll be a mix—an' all colored folks'll look alike!"

"By Jove, Memphis!" ejaculated Andy. "I believe you're not far wrong. First thing we know there'll be a race war on!"

"Yes, suh, that's jest whut I figger. But I'se not said nothin' yet to nobody but you."

"Can't some of you stop Steamboat and his bunch?"

"No, suh, boss, I'se 'fraid not. Ain't no colored man goin' tackle Steamboat—not no time, an' least of all w'en he's drinkin'!"

The door of Steamboat's car was flung open while Andy stood considering, and a broad beam of light shone out. A roaring voice—Steamboat's—reached them.

"I'se not goin' 'low nobody interfere in my bizness! No, suh! If I want go up an' buy me a li'l drink, tha's my bizness, an' ain't no white folks goin' stop me! Can't nobody——"

The door was slammed shut again, and the roaring voice and the howls of approval were partially shut off. Andy looked around to where Memphis Joe had been standing. But Memphis Joe was moving away—a deeper shadow in the shadows that lay along the side of the depot. That roaring voice obviously had been too much for his nerves.

"Memphis!" called the agent.

But Memphis paused not.

"You do whut you kin, Mistuh Agent." The words floated back from the retreating steel ganger pleadingly. "Might be yo' could call on the company fo' help."

Memphis Joe faded around the far corner of the building and was gone.

Andy, worried and perplexed, hauled the truck out to the front of the station and then entered his office. He went to the key of the train wire and called Dispatcher Potts, whose office was at Wharton.

"Some of the steel gang men are threatening to make trouble tonight," he said when the dispatcher had answered his call. "Could you get some police officers out here soon?"

"Why, yes—likely," replied Potts. "What seems to be the matter, Andy?"

"They got some booze and are showing signs of going on the war-path. Liable

to be a battle on between them and the townfolk if things are not stopped."

"The devil!" said the dispatcher, plainly aroused. "Stick there a few minutes, and I'll call you."

Peck waited impatiently. It was five minutes before the dispatcher called.

"Captain Caney of our police force was still in his office," spelled Potts. "He's gathering up several of his men, and they'll leave here on a special, likely a light engine, inside of ten or fifteen minutes. That means they should get to Belham inside of forty-five minutes."

"Good!" said Andy. "They'll be needed."

"We got hold of Superintendent Carrick and Supervisor Quinn, too. They'll be on the special. No actual trouble yet, is there?"

Peck held the key open a few seconds. So Carrick was coming. He wondered if the superintendent still considered what the steel gang did as none of his—Andy's—affair. He thought of Ina and his spoiled wedding-day, and his jaw set grimly. When he came, the old man better not say much, or he might hear something.

He tapped the key again.

"No," he said to Potts, "but it's liable to break soon, judging by the signs. Tell 'em to hit the ball."

"They sure will. Hold the gang down, if you can, till they come and keep me posted as much as possible."

"I will," promised Andy. "Good-by—here comes 73."

He dashed out of the station as the train drew in and pulled his truck up to the express-car door. Several small boxes of express matter were unloaded, and then the messenger handed Peck a sealed package.

"Here's a package the Wharton people told me to be sure to get to you tonight," said the man in the express-car. "Sign here."

Andy signed the messenger's book, and the train departed. He ran the truck around the station, dumped the boxes into the wareroom and then reentered the office, the sealed package under his arm. It was, he knew, the package containing the pay-roll sheets and the money with which the steel gang was to be paid.

As Andy entered the office, an unseen pair of eager eyes, outside, watched him closely through the rear office window. The furtive, glistening eyes saw the agent place the package on his desk and examine it for a moment. But the agent's next move was not so pleasing. Stepping to the front of the office, Peck pulled down the shades of the two windows there and then moved to the one rear window and pulled down that shade.

The silent watcher in the darkness outside moved back as Peck approached the last window, and he muttered in disappointment as the blind was lowered. Fortune, though, seemed to favor him, for near the bottom there was a small slit in the worn, threadbare shade. Quickly the watcher applied an eye opposite the slit. He muttered triumphantly; he could see in.

The shades drawn, Peck approached the stationery cupboard that stood against the wall at one side of the office, opened the doors of it and from a shelf took a stack of large envelopes. Next he took the sealed package, shoved it to the back of the shelf and replaced the envelopes where they had been. Then he closed the cupboard doors.

That done, Andy glanced at the office clock. It had been 8:05 when he talked to the dispatcher. It was 8:20 now; the special should be on its way. He went to the key and called.

"Has the special started?" he asked Potts.

"Just pulled out," answered the man who ran the trains. "Things all right yet?"

"Yes, as far as I know," replied Andy. "I'm going up-town now and see how affairs are developing. Will try to get back here soon and report."

VI

THERE was a perfect buzz of excitement around Scanlon's Hotel as Andy Peck drew near. The hotel stood on the main street between the post-office and a general store and was several squares from the depot. The barroom was a long room at one side of the building. On the street corners near-by different small groups of Belham citizens stood, talking low and seriously and eying the windows of the saloon.

As Peck approached the side door of the barroom, the door was pushed open from the outside and a man went in—Steamboat. Andy was a little surprized, because he

had supposed that Steamboat and his crowd were already all within; their camp-car had been dark and silent when he left the station. He stepped to the door himself, pushed it open an inch or so and put his eye to the opening.

Standing lined up along one end of the bar were half a dozen of Steamboat's fellow steel gangers. Steamboat was just joining them, and they were greeting him with noisy sallies. At the other end of the bar stood "Big" Noonan, an oil-well driller and Belham's cock-of-the-walk. Near him stood five or six other town men, all of them watching the steel gangers and muttering to one another, their faces frowning, their eyes unfriendly. In back of the bar was Scanlon's barkeeper, plainly ill at ease.

"Give us all li'l drink o' gin, white man!" called Steamboat to the barkeeper.

The words, as he uttered them, were deliberately offensive. There was a slur to them, an innuendo on the "white man."

The barkeeper hesitated, glancing at the frowning faces of Big Noonan and his men.

Steamboat swaggered closer to the bar.

"Step 'long, white man!" he said loudly. "Whut you 'fraid 'bout?"

The barkeeper's face flushed; he took up a bottle from the array behind him.

Andy tarried no longer at the door. He let it swing to, went around to the front and entered the hotel office. From an inner room Proprietor Scanlon himself entered the office as Peck stepped in. His face was anxious; its ruddy glow was a shade paler than usual.

"Scanlon!" exclaimed Peck. "Just the man I want. You must refuse to give those colored men out there any more booze!"

He jerked his thumb toward the door that led from the office into the barroom.

Scanlon shook his head.

"I'd like to, Peck, but I'm more afraid to refuse than to give it to them. They've been acting ugly ever since they came in."

"But they'll only get worse if they keep on with the stuff!" remonstrated Peck. "First thing you know there'll be a riot on! Remember how it started before!"

"I know!" exclaimed Scanlon. He threw up his hands. "But I can't——"

A shout interrupted him—a shout that came from the barroom. Mingled with it was the crash of breaking glass. Then a roar arose, deeper shouts, and the sound of shattering glass was redoubled.

"My ——!" cried Scanlon. "Listen to that!"

Andy leaped for the barroom door and swung it open, Scanlon close behind. The barroom was filled with the furious clashing of bodies. All lights save a single one above the bar were out, smashed to bits. Fists thrashed about; vigorous, profane phrases were uttered aloud. And then in a second something flew through the air; there was another crash—and the one remaining light vanished.

"Come on, boys," called Big Noonan's voice. "Come on, get outside! Everybody go get his gun! We'll go down and clean this black camp-car bunch out right!"

A yell of approval came from what must have been the white belligerents. There was a rush in the darkened room, and the outer side door burst open. The sound of swiftly moving feet came to the tense Andy and Proprietor Scanlon. Apparently the steel gangers had followed the Belham citizens out, for the barroom became silent. Then, before Peck or Scanlon had moved, the barkeeper appeared, his face white.

"What started it?" demanded Scanlon, seizing the man's shoulder.

"That nigger—that Steamboat—tried to shove Big Noonan aside—and called him a name!" stumbled the frightened barkeeper. "Then Noonan landed on him—and they all waded in!"

That was enough for Andy; he waited to hear no more. Things, he felt, were moving too swiftly for him to control. He ran out of the office, down the street, popped into a side alley and legged it for the depot. He saw men running; cries carried to him. Some of the shouts, he thought, sounded as if they were coming from Steamboat's crowd—defiant cries. He ran his best.

There was confusion around the camp-cars as Peck neared the station—high-pitched chatter, figures flitting in and out of the doors. Andy avoided the cars and came to the depot. Quickly he unlocked the waiting-room door, entered and snapped the lock again behind him, entered the office and closed that door also.

Upon leaving, he had turned off all the inside station lights. Now he did not relight them. He had raised the shades before departing, and a platform light just

outside shone through the front office windows, making enough light for him to find his way about in the familiar office. He opened the train wire key.

"She's broke!" he said to the dispatcher. "The fight is on! Started up-town and is working this way fast. How's the special coming?"

"She's getting along," replied Potts quickly. "Ought to show up there inside of ten minutes."

"If she doesn't do better than that, she's liable to find nothing but pieces left," said Andy.

"She's rolling!" assured the dispatcher. "Anybody hurt?"

"Can't tell—hope not," answered Peck. He paused as a sudden fusillade of shots rang out somewhere up around the camp-cars. "They're shooting now!" he said to Potts.

"They are!" flashed the dispatcher. "Are you in any danger yourself, boy?"

"Guess not," lied Andy, and he smiled a little.

He had heard several things plunk against the station right after the volley of shots. The marksmen were shooting high and wild and hitting the depot.

"Watch yourself," began Potts—and that was as far as Andy paid any attention to what the dispatcher was saying.

There was a sudden crash at the rear window of the office. Glass flew in a shower over the office floor.

"Hoky!" breathed Andy and at once dropped to the floor, crouching down in the obscurity and protection of the corner at the end of the telegraph desk.

Several lesser crashes followed at the window, as if something were being used to knock out the ragged pieces of glass left sticking there after the first blow. Then a black blur abruptly appeared between the broken sashes, and a figure dropped quickly inside the office. A faint ray of light from the platform lamp outside fell on the intruder's face.

Steamboat Jackson!

THE agent crouched lower in his corner, astonished but silent.

Without an instant's delay Steamboat moved to the stationery cupboard. He jerked the doors open, reached in and pulled out a bunch of big envelopes. He reached in again, brought out something else and laid it on the ledge of the ticket window, close beside the cupboard. Dark as the office was, the agent knew what the colored man had placed on the window ledge. It was the package of pay-roll money!

A sort of savage ejaculation of pleasure came from the steel gang man as he put down the package of money. But he did not linger over his rejoicing. From the cupboard then he quickly pulled out envelopes, tissue sheets and various sizes of paper forms. These he pulled apart swiftly and piled on the floor in a heap about the corner of the wooden cupboard. There was the scratching of a match, and a little burst of flame flared up. Steamboat reached down and touched the flame to the edge of a sheet of paper in the heap that he had made.

Steamboat's back, as he stood at the cupboard, had been turned to Andy Peck. The agent's amazement at the colored man's entrance had only been increased by his further surprize at Steamboat's bringing forth of the money—by his surprize that the man should have knowledge of it and of its hiding-place.

And then, as Steamboat piled the paper on the floor, some flash of explanation came to Andy—some perception of Steamboat's true reason for inciting the riot. If Steamboat had started the trouble pay-day night after receiving his wages, the agent would not have been so perplexed. Andy had wondered, though, why the fellow had cut loose tonight, the night before pay-day. But now he knew.

Up around the camp-cars the shouts had risen in volume, but so far there had been no repetition of the shooting. As Steamboat struck the match and bent forward, Andy Peck, silent as a cat, rose on the balls of his feet. As the match flame was touched to the paper, he grabbed his stout-legged office chair from the floor beside him and swung it in the air.

"You treacherous devil!" cried Andy and brought the chair down on Steamboat's head.

The blow was true, but the colored man's head also was true—to type. The steel ganger staggered erect as the swiftly spreading flame on the floor lit up the office. Surprized and slightly bewildered he was, but his eyes flashed wickedly as he faced the agent.

"I'll tear your heart out!" he roared and made a lunge at Peck.

"Try it!" invited Andy, swinging his chair again.

And this time he didn't aim at the head—he aimed a smashing sidewise blow at the black man's shins. Steamboat's legs were swept from under him like straws. He fell to the floor with a tremendous thump, his howls filling the office.

"Oh, name o' God!" he moaned. "Don' do that! Don' do that no mo', Mistuh Agent!"

Agent Andy, chair poised again, held back.

"Will you be good?" he demanded.

"Yes, suh! Yes, suh!" groaned Steamboat. "Only jes' don' hit my laigs no mo'!"

There was an abrupt grinding of brakes out in front of the office before Andy could say more and a hissing of steam. Unperceived, the special had arrived—a light engine. The waiting-room door flew open with a crash as stout shoulders were set against the lock's resistance. There was a tramping of heavy feet inside. Andy flung open the office door. Carrick, Quinn, Capt. Caney and three other men swept in, flashlights and pistols in hand.

"Peck!" cried the superintendent, amazed at the sight in the office. "What in the devil! What's this fire? We saw it through the window!"

But Peck was all business; he had a plan in mind.

"Watch that man on the floor!" he exclaimed. "Grab him up and make him walk!" And without further ado he snatched up the office water bucket and dashed its contents on the burning heap of paper. The fire by that time had been licking eagerly at the stationery case. But the water was sufficient; the flames abruptly expired.

"Come along! We got to hurry!" cried Andy then. He grabbed up the package of pay-roll money from the ticket window ledge and thrust it into Quinn's hands. "Hang on to that!" he said.

Capt. Caney meanwhile had hauled the abject Steamboat to his feet. Peck clutched the colored man's other arm. Pushing and tugging, he started for the door.

Amazed and not comprehending, they seemed all to recognize Andy's leadership. In a group they burst out of the station and headed toward the near-by camp-cars, Caney and Peck in the lead, dragging the reluctant steel ganger between them.

"What's the idea?" grunted Caney as they stumbled on. "What're you working at?"

"Wait!" panted Andy. "Not time now to explain. Have to get this thing headed off before some one gets killed—if some one hasn't already been. You just follow my lead and back me up!"

The moon had come up since Andy's hasty return to the office from up-town, revealing the camp-cars and surroundings clearly as the party approached. All lights in the cars were now out, the cars' occupants lurking in the obscurity inside.

As the party rounded the end of the string of cars, the Belham citizens, gathered in the shadow of a warehouse at the head of the siding, apparently mistook them for charging steel gangers. A shout arose.

"Here they come, boys!" It was Big Noonan's voice. "Out and at them!"

There was a mighty shout in answer, and the Belhamites leaped out for battle. From Steamboat's darkened car an answering cry went forth, and some shots flashed out. Andy Peck dropped Steamboat's arm and jumped ahead of his party.

"Keep back, men!" he shouted to the oncoming townfolk. "Keep 'em back, Noonan! Everything's all right now!"

The Belhamites, recognizing Peck's voice and perceiving their mistake as to the party's identity, faltered and came to a halt. Only Noonan pressed forward.

"What!" he cried. "That you, Andy?"

"Yes," replied the agent. "Just hold your men a minute! I'm going to fix things."

He turned and grasped Steamboat by the arm.

"Tell your men in that car to let up!" he commanded sternly. "Tell them to come out here, quick!"

Steamboat, overawed, did not demur. He faced his car.

"Come on out, Geo'ge!" he called dejectedly. "Come on, you an' all the boys!"

"Fo' the lan' sakes, that you, Steamboat?" said one in the car, evidently Geo'ge; his head was cautiously sticking out an open window. "We-all been wond'ring whar you been!"

"It's me," admitted the gloomy Steamboat.

"You'll not be harmed," put in Peck

to the men in the car. "And, when you get out here, I'll tell you where Steamboat's been."

From the car next to Steamboat's a voice now spoke—Memphis Joe's voice, coming from the doorway.

"Am that you, Mistuh Agent?"

"It is," answered Andy. "Get the boys all out, Memphis, and bring 'em here. Nobody'll get hurt."

A joyous whoop came from Memphis, and in a second he and the other men in his car tumbled out, arriving on the ground as soon as Steamboat's crowd. From other cars steel gangers did likewise, whooping as the word spread. They gathered together near where Andy, Carrick, Quinn, Steamboat, Caney and the other officers stood. Quietly now, perceiving that some strange thing was happening, the Belham men and Big Noonan edged nearer, lining up on one side of the agent and his party, while the colored men lined up on the other.

"YOU men have been easy marks—suckers!" said Andy, addressing himself particularly to Steamboat's wondering, rather sheepish-looking half dozen. "Steamboat's been making you play tricks for him—tricks so he'd get the good things and you'd get nothing. Did you know that, George?"

"Whut you-all mean?" nervously said George, a tall, rangy buck.

"Why, you know how Steamboat's been blowing he was going South this Winter with a pocketful of money. But he hadn't got his pocketful. Today, though, he must have learned some way that I was expecting a package of cash on this evening's train. He decided that was just the cash he wanted.

"So he got some booze, managed to get you fellows worked up and finally got a good-looking riot started. Then, while you men did the fighting, he sneaked down to the station, broke in, found the money and tried to set the station on fire. The fire would be blamed on the riot, see—and his theft of the money would be covered up. But I happened to be in the station, and Steamboat came to grief!"

A stir—as of resentment—was visible among the half-dozen.

"Fo' Lawd's sake, Steamboat!" said George. "Am that right?"

But Steamboat made no answer. He merely hung his head and mumbled unintelligibly.

"Sure, it's right!" declared Andy. "Look at him, and you can tell for yourselves. And, of course, you don't know what the money Steamboat tried to swipe was for, do you, George?"

"No, suh," answered George.

"Well, I'll tell you. It's pay money that's to be used to pay the steel gang men tomorrow. That's the kind of man Steamboat is. He was going to take it all, and you fellows wouldn't have got any—not tomorrow, anyway. You'd have had to wait several days longer until another payroll was fixed up."

This time the wave of resentment that swept over the steel gang was not confined to the men from Steamboat's car; it went over the entire crowd, and there was a muttering of imprecations and threats. Seeing their bad-man subdued, the rest of the gang felt emboldened.

But Andy had turned away from them for a moment. He faced Big Noonan and the Belham men.

"You see how it is, Noonan," he said. "This Steamboat man here is really the only one to blame—and we'll get rid of him. He prodded on a few others, for the reasons I just gave. But most of these colored men didn't want any trouble. One of them came to me just before train-time tonight, told me he was afraid Steamboat was trying to stir up something and asked me to do what I could to stop it."

"I'd say you did what you could!" boomed Big Noonan. "You certainly stopped it!"

"Hurrah for Andy!" called several of the Belham citizens behind Noonan.

And three cheers were given, exuberantly. And then, to the embarrassed agent's confusion, they were echoed by the steel gang side. But Agent Andy kept his wits. He faced the colored men again.

"And, now that the fuss is over and you're going to get your money tomorrow, the railroad wants all you men to stay!" he cried. "All but Steamboat. It's he that's been making all the trouble—filling you full of lies about the cold weather and trying to scare you out—just out of pure devilishness. You stick with the railroad, and they'll see that you're kept warm—get lots of coal and plenty to eat. Here're

the big bosses—the superintendent and the supervisor. They'll tell you the same!"

Andy turned to the big bosses.

"How about it, gentlemen?" he said.

He looked at Quinn, and then he looked at Carrick. When he looked at Carrick, Andy's eyes were a little defiant.

But the superintendent was not slow to respond.

"That's right!" he affirmed loudly. "What the agent said goes. We'll take care of you! It's a promise! Will you stay?"

There was a half instant's hesitation. Then Memphis Joe spoke.

"Yes, suh!" he shouted. "I'se goin' stay! We-all goin' stay! What you-all say, big boys?"

He turned to his fellows. And a great shout of affirmation greeted him.

"Goin' stay!" roared the steel gang. "Goin' stay!"

"That's the stuff!" called Carrick enthusiastically. "We'll count on you, every one!"

He faced about to where Andy Peck stood. And then—for the first time in his life so far as any man there knew—he openly confessed to an error.

"Son," said Carrick quietly, "I've made a mistake. I'm just beginning to get an idea of what you've done here for us. And, if I'm not too late, I want to ask you to forget what I said the other day—forget it and stay here on this job. Will you do it?"

Andy could scarcely believe his ears. Somehow the possibility of anything like this had never occurred to him. For a moment the thought swept through his head that here was a most excellent opportunity to say something that would scorch Carrick's hide. But consideration of Ina and knowledge of what his staying would mean to her and to him checked his tongue—if not a certain sense of whimsicality that always was lurking at the back of his brain.

"I'll be so pleased!" he murmured.

IT WAS somewhat less than ten minutes after he had given the superintendent his answer that Andy came to the residence of Duncan, the miller. He was about to press the bell when the door flew open and Ina came out, apparently bound for somewhere in great haste. She stopped abruptly at sight of him.

"Andy!" she exclaimed. "I've been so worried and afraid—all that noise and shooting! I was just going out to hunt you!"

"You needn't now," he said, his face beaming. "I'm here."

"Is—is everything all right?" she questioned, seemingly a little puzzled at his very obvious joy.

"All right? Well, I guess yes!" He seized her in his arms. "We're going to have our little bungalow after all, little girl!"

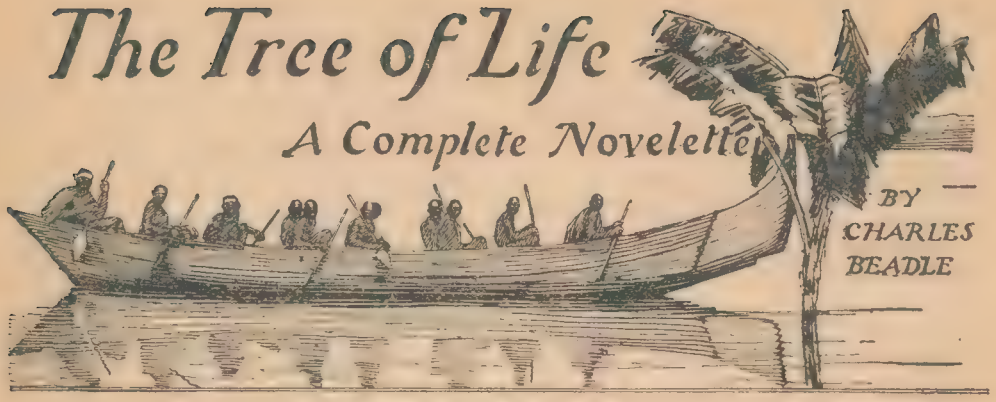
"Andy!"

"Yes, indeedy!" he cried. "Old man Carrick is going to keep me on the job, and——"

But that was as far as he got just then—for reasons that may be surmised.

The Tree of Life

A Complete Novelette



BY CHARLES BEADLE

Author of "The Winged Avenger," "Witch-Doctors," etc.

A VEIN of platinum on a jade ring was the river Mfunyaballa flowing through the forests of the French Congo. Above the place of a thousand islands is a slight rise of ground like a furry tongue protruding from the cavern of the forests, brown with the huts of the village of Basayaguru.

On a hot afternoon, when the only moving things were the scraggy goats, lazily scratching, open-beaked native chickens and chromatic lizards, a faint throb vibrated on the sulky air like the pulse of a distant drum. A yodeling cry from the steamy cavern of the forest caused the village to swarm with lithe ebon figures whose heads were decorated with frizzly hair, built a foot high above the forehead, streaming with long-bladed spears in their hands, like a flood of ants, to a point upon the riverside. Again came the cry from the forest from down the river. The distant throb grew into the "Eh! Ahh! Eh! Ahh! Eh! Ahh!" of the chant of paddlers. Presently around a bend appeared a canoe. As the host of natives squatted in silence, came stalking solemnly a tall figure with an ivory comb like a dagger stuck through the head-dress of hair and carrying an Express rifle. In the midst of his people he sank upon his haunches, gazing from a masklike face down the river with the eyes of a repressed child. The strange canoe hugged the far bank of the river, indicating by neglect of the rowers to avoid the sweep of the stream that they were uncertain of their reception.

Amidship of the leading canoe was a hood of woven grass from which protruded the helmet of a white man. When the canoe was immediately opposite the village, the paddlers backed water, and a tall man garbed in white calico with a green turban after the Arab manner stood up in the bow and chanted rapidly in a loud voice. The mob of natives watching gravely on the beach listened in silence. When the stranger had ceased, one cried back and was again answered by a chant and a signal made with the right hand raised.

Immediately the tall chief with the Express rifle rose to his feet, cried out imperiously and sat down. The canoe continued up-stream for fifty yards, swung round, came diagonally across the current and nosed its way through a flotilla of small and large canoes upon the village strand.

From the canoe sprang a short slender man clad in weather-worn khaki and wearing a small dark beard. The chief rose to his feet as the white approached and raised one hand, murmuring the Arabic word——

"*Salaama!*"

"*Salaama!*" responded the white.

As he raised his hand in the salute, his quick dark eyes were upon the Express rifle.

Solemnly the chief turned and led the way through the mob of his people up the hill to an open dusty space littered with goats, chickens and calabashes, where stood a thatched roof upon half a dozen poles, the palaver-house. Opposite to each other upon carved wooden stools, with the white man's interpreter in the green turban beside him, they began the formal palaver.

After more greetings and the solemn sniffing by the white man of the snuff proffered in a tiny gourd, the young chief

indifferently accepted presents of several bales of cloth and a Snider rifle with cartridges. During the interview the white man's sharp eyes were unobtrusively noting details. The interpreter informed him that the chief had graciously permitted the strange white man to camp in the open space of the village.

The white recalled the topographical surroundings, and after swift reflection he consented, knowing that, except for field clearings in the dense forest, there probably was no other ground suitable for a camp. These matters having been arranged, the chief intimated that he would present the credentials to his august father, Basayaguru, which entailed the presentation of another Snider rifle. As the young chief rose to depart, the white man eyed the Express as the warrior handed it to his superior.

"Notice that .450, Ali?" he commented to the interpreter as they continued to sit in the shade while their equipment was brought from the canoes. "D'you think there are any white traders round here?"

"Allah is all-wise," responded Ali Mohammed. "Perhaps the person has traded it from the South, sir."

"South!" exclaimed the little doctor briskly. "These people are not nomadic, are they? I've understood from the agent at Kavaballa's that no whites have yet been here; district only touched by occasional countrymen of yours. Isn't that right?"

"Allah is all-wise," repeated Ali monotonously, blinking both eyelids. "But my countrymen are not disposed to carry weapons of that kind, Doctor."

"Um, Um," muttered the little doctor. "*Hi!*" he shouted in broken Kiswahili, pointing his cane. "Make those men clear up this ground before you pitch the tent. *Fahamshi?* Tell 'em, Ali. This ground is nothing but a bug-preserve." He took out a cigar and lighted it. "What's the particular pet superstition here, Ali? Same as below or a new pope or something, eh?"

"Allah is ——"

"I asked you what you think?" snapped the doctor.

"I do not think, sir," returned Ali imperturbably. "The savage think many things that they dream."

"Dream! Dream!" He glanced at Ali and grinned like a friendly terrier through his short beard. "Um. You're right. All this *ju-ju* business is merely the projection of a dream."

"In my country that is what our wise men say."

"Do they, begad? Then they're a —— sight wiser than ours! Um. Um. Ali, do you know what particular legend they have here?"

"No, Doctor," admitted Ali. "I do not. There are many strange and mystical things in Africa."

"Mystical tommyrot!" snorted Dr. Herdwether. "I don't believe you know much about it all."

"Only Allah knows the truth."

"I didn't bring you here to know Allah's opinion upon every —— thing from yams to folklore. As soon as you possibly can, get them to talk."

"They will not tell us," said Ali, "for these peoples always seek to hide their cult from the infidel eyes of strangers."

"Um. Um. Well, try, confound it, try!"

The energetic little man jumped to his feet, inspected the tent, sniffed disgustedly and walked with short nervous steps to the outskirts of the village with the object of seeking another site free from native garbage and the ubiquitous flea. But there seemed no hope, for the up-river side was as unpromising as he had observed the down side to be.

The river swirled around the small peninsula and away on its main course, leaving a series of flat swamps and tiny creeks, crocodile invested, worming into the dense forests in all directions; from the land side of the village was a vista of regiments of tree-stumps in native fields hewn out of the primeval forest, fields in which women—many with babies wrapped in skins upon their arched backs—worked diligently with the small native hoe preparing the ground for the annual sowing. Away high over the sullen edge of the forest soared lazily a pallid halfmoon.

BACK through the village, noting the square hut of Arab influence surrounded by a small palisade with a large wild fig in the center, the little doctor tramped, batting at the myriad flies. As, perspiring and hot, he plunged into his green canvas chair, his personal boy emerged with whisky and a sparklet siphon. Each gesture of making, drinking, striking a match,

lighting a cigar and the tones of the voice irritably demanding the preparation of his rubber-bath was observed solemnly by the circle of boys and warriors tickling their curiosity while their wives, mothers and sisters toiled in the blazing sun in the fields.

As the purple shadows elongated, came a procession from the hill, led by the tall chief, Basafingu, Advancing to within three feet of the white man, he squatted down. His followers placed before him two elephant tusks of great weight and good condition. According to the etiquette of a great chief the little doctor pretended not to notice their presence. For some minutes he continued to smoke his cigar, interested in the swelling of the sun as it sank within the humid atmosphere above the trees.

As silently and abstractedly sat Basafingu and his ebon retainers. From another green tent, the replica of the doctor's, emerged Ali in the green turban and a green gown and, stalking with much dignity, sank upon a stool beside the doctor without as much as a twitch of the eyelid to acknowledge the presence of the young chief. In impressed silence the audience of warriors and boys and children watched the statuesque poses of the actors. At last Ali gravely permitted his eyes to rest upon Basafingu and, turning very slowly, observed quietly:

"There appears to be some of the savages bearing presents for you, Doctor. Probably it would be as well to observe them now."

"Probably it would," assented the doctor. "This sort of thing gets on my nerves. You bargain and begin the debate, Ali."

"Permit your eyes to see them, and I will speak."

The doctor accordingly turned his head and regarded the gathering with a bored stare. After some five minutes of formal greetings Ali observed:

"The chief, Basayaguru, the father of this person, sends you these unworthy and trifling presents. Nod your head with the utmost carelessness, Doctor. Perfectly admirable, sir. He intimates that he will be pleased to receive you in audience upon the morrow before the sun is yet high. Nod again if you please, and I will dismiss these savages."

Ali made the set reply, whereupon the young chief, apparently impressed, responded and rose. But, when the bearers of the tusks had departed in his wake, there remained an old man whose head-dress was not so high as those of the young men and was like a bunch of greasy white wool. The face was wizened and as finely networked with lines as knitted black silk; on each side of the tufts of white wool which was his beard swung lumps of quartz as big as a walnut, suspended from the distended lobes; skeleton arms and limbs protruded from his robes of wildcat skins. He bent his head after the manner of an Arabic salaam until he revealed the scraggy wrinkles on the back of his neck; then he spoke, mumbling toothlessly——

"This exquisitely wrinkled person," observed Ali, "intimates that he is a doctor, sir."

"Not of divinity, I trust?" queried the little man with a twitching lip.

"It is injudicious to exhibit levity in the presence of the ignorant," admonished Ali gravely.

"Perfectly correct, Ali, perfectly correct. But what may the creature want?"

"He is, I deduce, the tribal medicine-man."

"Oh. A brother witch-doctor, begad! Um. Er—just the beggar we ought to make friends with, eh, Ali? What does he want?"

"As ever in this world among the infidel, he wishes undoubtedly a present of worldly goods of some denomination."

"Talk, man, for heaven's sake, talk," snapped the little doctor, "or I shall have to go into the tent to laugh. Ask him what the current *ju-ju* is."

"The moment is most inopportune," retorted Ali woodenly. "With your permission I will instruct Yamagulu to present him with two knives and a small bale of cloth and your most august respects."

"All right, but add a Snider to the respects. And find out how much we can buy him for?"

"The time is most injudic——"

"Never mind; try him."

"As you wish, Doctor."

After commanding the head man, Yamagulu, to bring the presents specified, Ali engaged the witch-doctor in polite conversation regarding the exalted status of the white chief, all that appertained to him and the imaginary objects of the expedition. The rifle and goods were brought and placed at the feet of the old man, who

apparently remained unaware of them. At length Yamala, the witch-doctor, made his adieux and rose, leaving the presents upon the ground to be collected by his people.

"Well, what did he say?" demanded the doctor.

"In this case, Doctor, I have considered it inexpedient to obey you."

"—— you!"

"I wish to remind the doctor that I have lived and traded among such savages as these for a period of fifteen years; therefore it is to be presumed that I may possibly be permitted to be better acquainted with them and their minds than the doctor."

"Possibly, Ali, but—well, this confounded beating about the bush irritates me."

"The doctor will permit me to remark that, if he persists in applying the Occidental attitude to the Oriental mind, the chance of gaining the desired information, economical and social, will be considerably diminished thereby."

"You're a dear!" exclaimed the little doctor, showing his teeth in a grin. "But —all right, Ali, go your own way, but for heaven's sake don't mull it."

"As Allah wills!" observed Ali and turned his bronze Arab-Somali features toward the two tusks, appraising them with bright expert eyes. "Have you remarked, Doctor, the exceptional generosity of the chief? These tusks are considerably over one hundred pounds each and therefore, at the present market-price, of value considerably over one hundred guineas. Never have I known any of these savage chiefs to recompense a stranger so disproportionately to the value of the present bestowed. Never, Doctor."

"All right, Ali; so much the better for you. Keep 'em, my boy; only don't forget to pump my ancient medical colleague."

"A thousand thanks to you, Doctor," said Ali, salaaming. "I will assuredly endeavor to recompense you to the best ability."

"Oh, shut up, Ali. I like you, but you're a bore sometimes. Hi, Yamagulu, whisky soda. *Upesi!*"

II

VIOLET twilight stained with green died hurriedly, leaving the dented moon as if battered with the boredom of the chiliads to gaze incuriously upon microcosmical contortions. From the village of Basayaguru rose continuously, like puffs of invisible steam from an engine-exhaust, the rhythm of a drum above the murmur of the forest and the swirl of the river in the sulky air.

Like the red eye of a familiar, winking in masonic import to old Yamala, the witch-doctor, squatting like an idol carved in ebony, was the glow of the little doctor's cigar as he sat in the doorway of his tent in the lee of the greenwood fire. Half in shadow beside him was Ali, his robes a volume of carven turquoise supporting the dignity of his turbaned head, a cameo in lazulite.

"Now, Ali," said the doctor, "it's really about time you got to business. We've had a week of this fooling. We've got a general idea of the supply of ivory and that your confounded people ruined the vine rubber ages ago. But we could have got that almost anywhere. Now try to find out exactly what is the basis of their cult—whether it is the same in this part as down-country. Understand?"

"It most usually is so, Doctor," responded Ali.

"Well, but you don't know. I want facts, not suppositions."

"I still venture to doubt whether the moment be expedient yet," objected Ali tonelessly.

"Do as I tell you, confound you!"

"The Occidental and the Oriental ——"

"Shut up!"

"Very good, Doctor. But you will please note that I do not take the responsibility. I obey."

As tonelessly as an oracle Ali spoke fluently to the old man Yamala, who at length replied as monotonously.

"The witch-doctor states that they have a goddess who dwells in the woods."

"Well?"

"Please to contain your most natural emotions," reproved Ali. "It is not the custom of the Orient——"

"Oh, —— the Orient!"

"Please to be patient," remonstrated Ali and began anew to talk with the witch-doctor.

The old man rumbled on in periods, punctuated by assenting grunts from Ali. The doctor finished his cigar and lighted another. Yet still the two voices blended as if in a liturgy to the rhythmic throb of the single drum and the faint anthem of the

mosquitoes. The old man ceased and relapsed into immobility.

"Well, well? What is it?"

Ali was undoubtedly in a state of excitement indicated by a slight half-tone raise in the timbre of his voice.

"These peoples have, as you know, Doctor, been much influenced by the incursions of my own people. They were at one remote period the storehouse of our slaves, although in these days of your exquisite civilization one is compelled to take tribute in the form of merchandise only. I desire to point out that our ancient truths have influenced even these savages."

"You have," interrupted the doctor dryly. "Get on."

"The Occidental are not the ways of the Oriental——"

"Ali, shut up and get along with the yarn!"

"I hasten to obey, Doctor. I desire to state that these savages have confused an ancient philosophy with their own ignorant superstitions."

"Never mind that. What is the superstition?"

"As you will doubtless have read or learned, Doctor, each of these peoples have, with scarcely any exception, a belief in the spirits of the trees and the rivers. The correct word flees from me."

"Animism."

"Thank you, Doctor. Animism. But in this case they have confused——"

"Confound it," grumbled Herdwether, "never mind that!"

"They, as I wish to express, believe in the spirits of the wood and the plants. They have, the priest tells me, here a sacred and holy tree, which is the mother—I desire to express that it is the mother."

"Well, you have. What about it?"

"Because all other trees are male."

"The devil they are! Trees have sex as well as anybody else."

"Indeed true words as your exquisite education has taught me. But not with these peoples. It is that I wish to express that they have confused their superstition with the truths of my peoples, the Berbers. As may and yet may not be known to you, Doctor, the Berbers of the Atlas before the coming of the true believers——"

"Meaning your crowd, eh?"

"Indeed surely, Doctor. The Berbers, I may state, had faith in the mother of the universe, the sun, which is, they said with admirable logic, the source of heat and therefore of all things and therefore was fecund and therefore was a female, the mother of all."

"What the devil's that got to do with this *ju-ju* idol?"

"THERE is no idol, Doctor. It is a tree."

"What?"

"Truly indeed what, Doctor. The priest here informs that upon the mother tree depends quite, and undoubtedly logically from their point of view, the crops and all that is grown and therefore their alimentation."

"Yes, yes, the old idea from Jack in the Green to the Flamen Dialis. Well?"

"And therefore, with exquisite logic, that it is necessary for the tree to be fertilized and therefore to be married. At the first moon of the sowing, which is close unto us now, is the ceremony of the marriage of the magic tree."

"Married? To whom?"

"To whom the sacred tree is married I can not say. Such is without doubt as in all religions a matter forbidden to infidels and the ignorant."

"Well, buy the information then."

"It is not possible to buy faith. With one thousand pardons I will express myself for the reason of my excitement," replied Ali as coldly as the liturgy. "According to my way of thinking, the priest is most friendly disposed toward us. Indeed, he has invited—even more in the limits of his language—he has prayed that we stop to see the ceremony of the marriage of the sacred tree."

"Um. Um," mumbled the doctor, scratching a mosquito-bite on his left ear. "But do they usually invite strangers to witness these sacred rites?"

"Undoubtedly not. Undoubtedly not, Doctor. That is also one reason for the state of excitement in which you see me."

"Um. Um." The red eye of the doctor's familiar glared ferociously at the carven image in ebony by the dull embers. The throb of the drum pulsed steadily. "It appears to me that there must be a reason behind the invitation. What can it be? Is it money? I mean more presents? Yet they've been most unusually lavish already, haven't they?"

"More than exquisitely lavish," asserted Ali. "The reason is known to Allah."

"Confound Allah!"

"The doctor is unconsciously blasphemous," reproved Ali.

"No; it's a gift, I assure you," grinned the doctor. "Um. Um. Well, about the ceremony business. What else did he say?"

"Is it not sufficiently astonishing that he should tell us these things? The doctor does not perceive the exquisite abyss between the Occidental and the Oriental."

"Exquisite twaddle. Is there a sacrifice? These devils invariably want lakes of blood to bathe their gods in."

"That is unknown to me, Doctor."

"Well, ask him, confound it!"

"His lips will be tighter than the shell upon the ocean shore, but, if it amuses the doctor, I will hasten to obey."

Again there followed the solemn liturgical conversation. The doctor moved restlessly as if the continuous beat of the drum sought his pulse.

"The doctor will observe that my words are as true as the Koran. The tongue of the black priest is swollen, which is to say, as the doctor will perceive, that he refuses to speak concerning that which is to him sacred and forbidden."

"Tabu, eh? Um. Well, ask him directly why he wishes us to see the ceremony; whether all strangers are invited, or whether he has just taken a fancy to our pretty faces?"

"I hasten to obey, but the product thereof will be excessively more lies than the leaves on the sacred tree. His ears, as I have intimated, are made deaf by the clamor of our words," reported Ali. "He intimates exquisitely politely that he would retire with the offerings of the white chief, saying that the bird of happiness will bang her wings in his breast so excessively that he will not be able to sleep, because the white chief has willingly taken the acceptance to the marriage-feast."

"Um. Well, tell Yamagulu to give him whatever you think, Ali, and bundle him off to bed."

Ali's voice raised to summon Yamagulu, then appeared muffled as if deliberately hushed by clammy hands of the air on which rolled, with the rhythmic certainty of an Atlantic swell, the somber notes of the drum.

"What the devil's that drum for, Ali?" inquired the doctor irritably as he gazed at the fire, pondering.

"It is designed to prepare the mind and the body for the marriage-feast upon the full moon, Doctor."

"Why, that's about tomorrow or the next day, isn't it?" observed the doctor, glancing up at the battered moon.

"Two nights more yet."

III

IN THE steamy heat of the morning the first conscious impression of the doctor was that a pulse was beating in his brain. The mental effort of an automatic medical diagnosis awoke him to the reality of the merciless beat of the drum. He swore violently and shouted for coffee. Outside the net the flies had already taken over the duty of torment from the mosquitoes. The doctor breakfasted on river-fish in an exceedingly bad temper.

The inconvenience of the camp-site began to weaken his resolution to stay even the few days. In the jungle one had not to scratch all day as well as all night. He consulted Ali but as ever merely elicited the imperturbable, "Allah only knows." The doctor gulped the quinine he was in the act of swallowing. The brilliant black eyes of Ali in his bronze cameo features regarded him coldly.

"If the doctor would permit himself to meditate upon the Occidental and the Or——"

"Meditate!" spluttered the doctor, coveting the irrefragable composure of the Arab. "—— it, I believe I've a touch of malaria. Tell Yamagulu to get me the thermometer."

But his temperature was normal and his pulse as steady as the drum-throb. Later in the morning he persisted in visiting the old chief, Basayaguru, in spite of Ali's assurance that no more information would be forthcoming. But at any rate an audience would serve to fill up time. The old man, in token of his greatness and beauty, was so fat that he could scarcely walk. He lay like a baby hippopotamus upon his skins in the perpetual shadows of his square hut and appeared to do nothing save eat, drink, snuff and sleep, leaving affairs of war and peace to his son and politics perforce to Yamala, the witch-doctor.

To each of the questions put by Ali on the white man's behalf, he merely grunted

non-committally, a process which led one to suppose that he was innocent of every crime as well as virtue that the black mind could conceive. The only articulate sentence elicited was an order to a slave to send the white chief another present of a large tusk of ivory. The doctor regarded the tusk in dismay.

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded of Ali. "We can't possibly make return presents of anywhere near the value of these three tusks and the small ones. What do you think he's after? My Express? Because he won't get that, naturally."

"Allah only knows."

"Oh!" The doctor plucked savagely at his beard. "Ali, I ask what you think, not what Allah thinks."

"It is impossible to state, Doctor. Never have I witnessed such exquisite generosity from a native negro."

The little doctor returned to the camp, feeling, as he remarked to Ali, that there was something in this confounded country that would make a saint irritable. And, as he retired beneath the mosquito-net for a siesta, he grinned at the recollection of the sage advice based on theoretical knowledge he had given to clients about to leave for the tropics, to guard against irritation and liquor. During the hottest hours, when man and beast and bird, but not woman, made obeisance to the sun, the heart-throb of the drum continued mercilessly until the doctor in his sudorific bath struggled with an impulse to seize his Express and make an end of the tormentor.

At about four he suddenly grabbed the gun and, summoning Yamagulu, decided that he would seek something upon which he could wreak his exasperation. Yamagulu very naturally protested that neither bird nor beast would be stirring before the cool of the sinking sun, but the little doctor felt that in such a country to thrust forward reason was positively indecent and as incongruous as a Socratian debate in a lunatic asylum.

In the village not a body stirred. Unnoticed they selected the small canoe and embarked. The doctor directed the sullen Yamagulu to paddle down-stream along the bank until they should find fairly solid ground to land. About half a mile away, as they coasted just outside the guardian swamp, he perceived a narrow passage in the dense reed as if made by canoes. Up this turgid waterway the doctor insisted upon going. Fifty yards' paddling and reed hauling brought them within the line of the great trees and upon fairly solid earth beneath the dense jungle.

The doctor and the sullen Yamagulu landed and tore their way for some distance, earning a bath of sweat in the process. But this did not deter the doctor, who had obstinately made up his mind that he wanted distraction from the deadly ennui of the village. Farther on they struck higher ground and came upon a grove of considerable size.

Suddenly the sulky Yamagulu came to life and, touching the doctor's arm, pointed with his spear down the grove. The doctor failed to distinguish anything in the tangle of grass and bush. Then, just as he was about to whisper, he detected part of a bush that seemed to move. Slowly grew the form of some large animal. Calculating for the region of the heart, the doctor fired. A convulsive motion of the bush, and there leaped forth a big buck, high in the shoulders and dappled like forest light and shadow.

Again the doctor fired. The beast swerved to the right and disappeared. Yamagulu raced forward. The doctor followed and found him beside the buck. The first shot had been a fluke; striking the animal in the quarters as it had turned to flee, the bullet had lodged in the spine, killing it instantly.

"Okapi!" gasped the exultant doctor.

But, as he stooped, Yamagulu, grinning delightedly, drew his attention to a broad spoor through the dense grass which ten yards from the kill was streaked with blood, revealing that in all probability the mate was severely if not mortally wounded. Excitedly the doctor bade Yamagulu to stay and skin the slain animal and hurried off on the trail.

The beast was big and evidently bleeding heavily; so the spoor was easy to follow even for a white man. On panted the doctor, forgetful, as ever a hunter is, that time after all is an arbitrary affair. The ground rose steadily. The going became better at every yard. Where the trail led through thick bush, the beast had already forced a passage. As the ground sank into a slight valley, he caught a glimpse of the okapi as it dashed off from a shelter where it had apparently rested for a moment.

Wiping raining sweat from his eyes, the enthusiastic doctor plugged on down into a bog to his waist, dragged himself up the other side and on—and on—and on the little man struggled until quite suddenly the trail disappeared in a patch of jungle as thick as a grass mat. The doctor hunted furiously about—then with more care. No sign of blood; the blood-trail had disappeared entirely; not even a broken grass stem or twig could he find. Perhaps he had overrun the trail?

He cast about in circles. Fatigued and panting, he sat down to rest and wipe his streaming face. Just as he was about to make another effort, it suddenly occurred to him that the shadows seemed very dense. He glanced up through the leafy roof. The glittering ball of the sun was topping the trees. In a panic he snatched his watch. He stared incredulously at the hands pointing to a quarter past five. Only another three-quarters of an hour to sunset.

"——!" he muttered disappointedly. "I'll have to give him up now. I'll go back and help Yamagulu finish the skinning."

A rational and wise decision of the doctor's. He stepped forward briskly, hesitated, made a pace and stopped altogether. He glanced about in a bewildered childlike fashion at the wall of tree trunks festooned with creepers.

"When the devil—what the—oh."

Again he stared around more incredulously. Then very softly he said—

"Oh, God!"

HE HAD no more idea of the direction from which he had come than of the secret of the cult. He was fatigued. So he sat down again, sagely concluding that he might as well rest while he thought the matter out systematically. Yes. Systematically; that was the thing to do. Now where was the sun when they had killed the buck? Um. Ah. At first he was sure that it had been over his right shoulder; then as equally positive that it had been behind him. Finally he concluded that there hadn't been any —— sun at all.

For a few moments the doctor was occupied in informing himself exactly how many different kinds of a fool he was; he bethought himself of Yamagulu and proceeded to inform the African continent what particular species of criminal idiots it produced. Then he plucked at his beard and glanced at his watch again. Remained about forty minutes of daylight—that is, forest semi-gloom. Tropical twilight was the only thing in Africa in a hurry, decided the doctor bitterly. Then he rose determinedly and, choosing a direction at random, made the amusing assertion that he would continue in a straight line.

Within twenty yards he was bogged; he tried another direction and found impenetrable thicket; a third attempt found another bog. A puzzled wonder as to how the deuce he had ever arrived where he was if the confounded jungle was nothing but swamp-holes was broken by a brilliant idea. Of course! He would just fire a few shots which would bring the fool Yamagulu to him. Accordingly at intervals of half a minute he proceeded to carry out the scheme, which, however, was arrested by the appalling discovery that he only had left another ten cartridges—with the probability of spending the night in the jungle.

For a while he stood still, trying to concentrate upon listening for the expected yell from the succoring Yamagulu. In a few moments he became aware of the voice of the forest: a continued twittering hum, murmurs like lachrymose sighs, tiny squeaks and whispers, mysterious rustles, a sudden chatter and a harsh squawk, then a faint hooting. He fired another two cartridges in rapid succession. The echoes appeared like derisive laughter. A sudden screech behind him made him start convulsively.

"——!" he muttered as if afraid to speak too loud lest some one hear. "I need a dose of bromide."

The gloom appeared to be deepening with a hissing noise as if it were slithering through the leaves. Erupted unbidden into his mind an exact knowledge of African carnivora. He glanced questioningly toward a tree. Images of gorillas and snakes shuttered his eyes swiftly. He grew violently angry with himself at the discovery that he was searching for things in the darkness. Suddenly he cursed aloud, as if challenging the whole menagerie of animals, and started off swiftly straight ahead of him.

Fighting with an impulse to run, struggling to suppress imagination, the doctor plowed on, tearing far more desperately than he realized, through thickets of creepers, tacking beside swamp-holes. Firmly he persisted in telling himself his exact medical

condition. The forest appeared to overhear his thoughts and to laugh in rustling, weeping, insidious chuckles. Against his will he pulled out his watch repeatedly to peer at it in the gloom. Then he tore on to stop a moment to listen for Yamagulu's cry, only to hear the forest tuning up for the nocturnal anthem.

The gloom was so dense now that he could not see ahead of him. The canopied roof seemed writhing with innumerable arms, groping down—down. He crashed hastily through a tangle of creepers which seemed to be trying to strangle him, splashed in water and saw the gleam of moonlight on water. He stopped, drowning mosquitoes in his own sweat, wondered where he was, hoped that it was the creek and shouted—

"Yama-gu-o-o-o-o-o."

"Oo-oo-oo-o!" answered him.

A violent squawk brought him face about with his rifle to his shoulder. The forest murmured and sighed; mosquitoes buzzed in clouds.

Yie-el squealed a bird at him.

Muttering something about a tree, he blundered on along the swamp edge, fell over something and grabbed. His hand clutched the edge of a small canoe drawn up on the swamp grass. At first hope made him think that it was his canoe and that Yamagulu was in the forest looking for him. He gave a mighty yell. That sobbing echo closed his mouth. A short investigation showed him that the canoe was smaller than his own. He glanced across the glimmer of water at the dense wall of the opposite jungle. Then suddenly like a caress he became aware of the regular pulse of a distant drum.

Desire carried the conviction that he had landed on the farther side of the creek from the village and that therefore by crossing he could make the camp by following the drum. He placed the rifle in, pushed the canoe hurriedly over the swamp up to his knees and clambered aboard. Pulling the canoe along the swamp-grass, he made deep water and began to paddle with his hands. A dark object near the other side, which he thought was a floating log, suddenly splashed and disappeared.

"Crocodiles!" he gasped and paddled furiously.

He landed without mishap, dragged the canoe up as far as possible and stopped to listen for the drum. He could hear nothing save the weep of the jungle. The curtain of the trees cut off the vibrations. He hesitated a moment before plunging into the dense shadows. The ground became firmer; it began to rise. On and on he struggled, scarcely conscious of the mosquitoes. Again he saw the moon and a few paces farther on stood on to the edge of a great glade. A glow caught his eager eyes. He hastened toward it. In the moonlight was the faint outline of a hut.

"Thank God!" he muttered. "The village!"

As he hurried on, he perceived a great fence around the hut in which was the glow of a fire at the base of an enormous tree. The doctor reached the fence and peered through. He put up his hand and wiped his eyes.

"My God!" he murmured. "Am I crazy?"

Seated beneath the great tree in a camp-chair in the moonlight was a bearded white man in full evening dress; an opera hat was tilted on his head; the firelight glowed upon the expanse of shirtfront.

IV

"HALLUCINATION!" muttered the doctor and pawed at his damp face again. But the image remained. The head was sunk forward slightly; the brown beard straggled over the shirtfront; one black-sleeved arm hung listlessly outside the chair, the other upon the right knee. In the moonlight the eyes glinted blue as the man stared at the fire.

"But a white man in evening kit!" whispered the doctor incredulously. "Here! Good God! No, no," he added after peering at the outline of a square hut built beneath the enormous boughs of the giant tree. "It is. I'm not crazy. The feller's crazy. Evening kit—good God! What the—he must be crazy, poor devil!"

The impulse to call out was inhibited. He began to form excuses to himself.

"I mustn't call out suddenly," he reflected, "or maybe I shall scare the life out of him. I must humor the poor devil. Yes, yes. Of course—unbalanced. They do go that way out here. Queer. Understand it, too, begad! Been in the forest all night perhaps, poor devil," he added quite as unconscious of the ludicrous as of the fact that he was in reality talking about himself.

He opened his mouth and drew in his breath, yet he did not call out. He wriggled his shoulders as if trying to shake off an incubus. Then he realized that he was fearful that, if he shouted, the vision would disappear and he would know that he was crazy. He peered silently for a few moments, blinking his eyes.

"No," he decided. "It is real. —— queer. That bloody forest upset my nerves. Um, Um. Better find the gate and let him see me when I shout. Mustn't scare the poor devil."

He began to move cautiously along the palisade, six feet high, made of stout saplings, swallowing and muttering excuses to account to himself for not shouting. Stopping occasionally to peep through the interstices, he followed the circle until he came to the great trunk of the tree, fully fifteen feet in diameter. He paused again for another look. That the vision was still there he noted with a feeling of reassurance. As he walked around the trunk, he was vaguely conscious that it faced an open expanse of the great grove, a cavern of basalt floored with jade and topped with fantastic pinnacles of chrysoprase.

On the other side he came upon the gate barred with great heavy balks of timber. The man sat exactly in the same position; had not moved a finger apparently. A wild thought that he was dead flitted across the doctor's mind. He began to draw breath to shout but stopped in indecision. What should he say? "Hi? Hullo?" Perhaps the man was not English. Probably not? What then? The question grew into absurd importance. Still the doctor stared through the balk gate. The rustle of something in the grass behind him evoked an uneasy movement and a clutching at the rifle, destroyed the fascination in the ludicrous argument as to exactly what he should say.

"I say, hullo!"

The man did not stir. Then the doctor was aware that he had whispered. He gripped his rifle tightly and with effort shouted—

"Hull-o!"

"O-o!" repeated the grove.

The doctor glared anxiously, dreading that the figure would disappear. But the head rose slowly; the eyes moved. Again the head sank despondently.

"Thank God, he is there," muttered the doctor, "but he thinks I'm an owl."

"I say—er—hullo!"

Once more the beard rose slowly.

"I say, I'm here!" continued the doctor fatuously. He could see the eyes staring as if mildly inquiring in the moonlight. "I say, old chap, are you English? It's all right! Er—would you mind letting me in?"

He perceived the beard to part suddenly, disclosing white teeth. The man was smiling.

"Good God," murmured the doctor. "He is crazy. Poor feller!

"I say," he began again, enunciating carefully, "I've lost—my—way, y'know. Would you mind—letting me in? I'm Herdwether—Borden Millar Herdwether. Oh ——! Hi! I'm an English doctor, Magdalen and London. I say, aren't you English? *Parlez-vous français?* Eh?"

Still smiling distinctly in the moonlight, the man raised a white hand and slowly waved it toward the doctor.

"My God!" ejaculated the doctor, shuddering involuntarily. "Am I crazy or are you?"

He stared. The eyes resumed the despondent contemplation of the fire.

"What on earth am I to do? He thinks I'm not here, and I thought he wasn't." He pawed at his damp hair. "If I throw anything to attract his attention, he'll think I'm a lion or some wild animal. And I'm not." The little doctor was unconscious of the whimper in his voice. "I can't stop out here all night, —— it, and who is he, anyway? But what's he want to dress for?" he complained bitterly and glanced behind him at the cavern of the grove.

The doctor became aware of an illusion that he was within a barred cage like a captive monkey and that the man inside the fence was free. "There must be wild animals, or else he wouldn't have this confounded fence. Um."

The strange man rose to his feet, yawned and stretched his arms.

"O God, he's going to bed!" muttered the doctor resentfully. "It can't be more than nine o'clock." Then desperately, as the tall black back revealed the swallow tails, he shouted: "*Hii!* For God's sake, let me in!"

The tall figure turned sharply in his direction.

"Yes!" bawled the doctor. "It's all right! I'm here, I tell you! Herdwether!" The man was staring in his direction. "Yes, yes, come and let me in, and I'll

explain!" The beard waggled slowly as if in regretful dissent. "I am here!" yelled the doctor frantically. "Englishman. Doctor. I'm lost. Help!"

The man took two paces, stopped, and spoke incomprehensible words.

"No! no!" screamed the doctor. "Speak English! *Parlez français!*"

He could see the beard move as if the man were talking to himself. Suddenly the fellow stooped, picked up a glowing firebrand and slowly walked toward the gate.

"God, he thinks I'm a gorilla," muttered the doctor and involuntarily brought up his rifle.

"For God's sake, speak, man!" he yelled. "I'm real, I tell you! I'm a white man!" The bearded man in full evening dress with a firebrand in his hand stopped abruptly and stared toward the fence.

"A white man!" he exclaimed. "Where? Oh, my God, where?"

"Here! Here! I'm lost! Let me in! I'm lost!"

The man hesitated, moved as if to throw away the brand, arrested his arm and stooped again to peer at the fence.

"Who and what are you?" he demanded. "Are you real—or am I crazy? Speak!"

"No. No. I'm real!" shouted the doctor. "I'm English, I tell you."

THE man appeared satisfied, for he threw away the firebrand and advanced with long eager strides toward the gate, wrenched up the balks of timber and then, as if suddenly suspicious, leaped backward clear of the entrance. The doctor walked through, took off his helmet and held out his hand.

"How d'you do, sir! I'm Herdwether."

The big man gazed down at him and placed a hand to his forehead perplexedly.

"I suppose it's all right," he mumbled. "—— if I know. Er—how d'you do!" He touched the extended hand perfunctorily. "I—er—don't quite understand—yet. You said—are you a white man?"

"Yes, yes," said the doctor soothingly. "White, I assure you. English doctor, y'know. I—er—lost my way and—and saw your fire; so I just came along."

"Oh."

The eyes were still regarding him rather like a great child, uncertain as to whether the visitor was a tramp or an angel.

"My name's Herdwether—Borden Millar Herdwether. I'm here on a commission, y'know. Forgive me. I haven't the pleasure——"

"Eh? Oh."

Gazing incredulously, the man shook his beard as if trying to throw off an illusion. "Sorry. Er—I'm Dukely—Warren-Dukely, y'know."

"What! Warren-Dukely, the explorer?" exclaimed the doctor in astonishment.

The man giggled, throwing back his head.

"I beg your pardon!" he added more rationally.

"Not at all," said the doctor. "Not at all. Er—I wonder if you'd mind if we sit down? I—er—I'm rather fagged out."

"Fagged out, what?" The words appeared to act as a restorative. "I say, I'm awfully sorry. Of course! Come along." He started off toward the fire, stopped abruptly and, murmuring, "Forgotten the door, old boy!" hurried back and readjusted the balks.

The doctor waited for him, trying to catch a glimpse of the face. The man returned with great eager strides and to the doctor's amazement caught him by the shoulders and spun him around face to the moon.

"Good God Almighty!" he exclaimed. "That's good!" He dropped him as suddenly. "I say, I beg your pardon! You must forgive me, I—er—I'm a little off my chump, y'know. I—well, as a matter of fact, I haven't seen a white man for years. I don't know. I—but come and sit down." He strode forward to the hut, his swallow tails flirting in the moonlight, and emerged, dragging another camp-chair. "Sit down, old man. By the way, I didn't quite catch? Herwether?"

"Herdwether," said the doctor, sitting, and he almost giggled as he saw the man pick up his tails as he sat as if he were in a club.

Dukely still stared a little incredulously. The doctor observed in the fire-glow the gauntness of the cheek-bones and the sunken eyes. Embarrassed, he looked at the fire, thinking—

"He can't be quite crazy if he knows it, but what on earth is he dressed for!"

Conscious of the eyes devouring him, he sat still, considerately waiting for his host to speak.

"My God, it's good to see you!" exclaimed Dukely at length. "I—d'you know I heard

your voice calling, but—but, —— it, I thought I was dreaming."

"I understand," said the doctor quietly.

"One gets rather ratty after a while. Begin to see things if you're not careful. Er—'r' you camping near here?"

"Yes," assented the doctor. "Down at Basa-something's village, wherever that is. I was out shooting, y'know, and got lost."

"Oh yes."

As he stole a glance at the man, a black sleeve crept out, and a hand lightly touched his arm. Involuntarily the doctor started. Yet he had noticed that the hand was well kept, the nails polished.

There was silence for some minutes. The forest murmured and whispered and wept. Yet the sinister note was missing to the doctor's ears. Twice he glanced up at the bearded gaunt face. The man continued to stare almost like a yokel gawping at a circus fat lady. The doctor was embarrassed. A thousand questions leaped to his mind.

"Er," he broke out at length. "I wonder whether you have such a thing as a glass of water? I'm simply parched."

Dukely leaped from his chair as if galvanized.

"Certainly, certainly!" he muttered. "I'm an awful rotter!" and he disappeared into the hut to emerge with a calabash of water.

"Oh, thanks very much!" The doctor hesitated, glanced at the hut and up at the tall man in evening dress. He fumbled at his hip pocket. "Um. I—you don't mind if I—do you care for whisky?"

"Whisky!" echoed Dukely. The eyes brightened at the glint of a silver flask and were masked politely. "Good God, I haven't tasted whisky for—oh thanks!"

He almost grabbed, swallowed at a gulp, the tot of spirit which the doctor had proferred in the screw-cap; then he gasped, shaking his head at the calabash. The doctor took his share and a deep drink of water. As he placed the calabash on the ground beside him, the man sat down slowly and fell to gazing at his visitor again without speaking.

"Good God," thought the doctor, "is he going to stare at me all night?"

"Er—by the way," said he desperately, "have you—are you staying here long?"

The man started and seemed to shiver. He said slowly—

"Well, I'm going to be married in a day or so."

"Oh, yes, ah, of course," assented the doctor politely.

"I'm the King of the Wood, y'know."

"Oh, yes, yes," ejaculated the doctor as he thought, "My God, he's as mad as a hatter."

V

THE man with the beard laughed, a rusty throaty sound, and stroked his nose delicately.

"I beg your pardon," said he. "I'm a little ratty. I mean I've been so long—er—here that—I forget that everybody doesn't know—well, who I am and that sort of thing."

"Quite so, quite so. Very usual phenomenon."

"Of course," continued the explorer, gaining more rationality in the tone of his speech and leaning forward in his chair; "you probably think I'm as mad as a hatter." The doctor looked away. "Not quite—yet." He stared at the fire meditatively. "By the way, what did you say you were here for, sir?"

"I'm on a commission; economic and social investigation, y'know."

"Social, eh? That's good!" Again he emitted a throaty chuckle. "We're frightfully keen on sociology here. Oh ——, yes! Er—but didn't you say you were a medical man?"

"Yes."

"H'm. Perhaps you'll understand a little better. Although I don't see why you should. I mean you won't be so inclined to think I'm quite insane."

"Not at all. Not at all."

"But you do! Oh yes. Quite natural. I should myself. By the way, you're not in a hurry, are you?"

"Oh no, not at all."

The teeth gleamed through the beard in a smile at the fire. Dukely shifted restlessly and looked up again.

"That whisky of yours, Doctor, has bucked me up a lot—pulled me together. I ran out six months ago. You know I'm not insane."

"No, no," assented the doctor, still wondering. "But have another."

"Thanks, old man!"

The skinny white hand again just refrained from grabbing the screw-cap.

"By the Lord, that's good!" he gasped as he handed back the flask. "Queer

how the bally stuff stings after so long. Er. H'm."

"Have a cigar?" added the doctor.

"Good Lord!" Heartiness was creeping in to the voice. "That's awfully good of you! No, don't bother for a match."

He bent forward, picked a firebrand with delicate fingers and sighed at the first puff. He sat back seemingly absorbed in the joy of the inhalation. The doctor began to note details: that the shirt was soft and yellow, frayed; the parched skin drawn tightly over an acquiline nose, and the care bestowed on the hands; even the beard had been trimmed.

"Yes," began Warren-Dukely reflectively. "I'm the King of the Wood." Again the doctor was conscious of the thrill imparted by insanity. "No, I'm not insane, Doc. I—am exactly what I say. Let me see. Confound it, there is something the matter with my mind. Difficult of—er—grasping what I want to say. You ought to understand that, eh?"

"Perhaps you haven't spoken English for a long time. Do you think in English?"

"No, that's it, by God! Good Lord, I never realized it until now. Never realized that I was so far gone. H'm. Now I will get started! Are you listening, Doc?"

"Yes, yes, of course."

"Well, I was—or am, I suppose—am Warren-Dukely—I told you that, didn't I? Yes. All right. Now I'm the King of the Wood. —— it! Do you hear that drum?"

The doctor listened and was aware of the faintest possible vibration.

"Yes. It's the drum in the village, isn't it?"

"Oh yes, the drum all right. Only—" He sighed and suddenly placed one hand over his eyes as if shutting out a vision. "I beg your pardon, I'll try to get on—and tell you what a mess you're in."

"I am?"

"Oh, I'll tell you. Er—about three years ago—or was it four? What's the date, old man?"

"Date? Oh—er—about the fourteenth of February, I think."

"God, yes, my stick's right. That's the drum."

"What drum?"

"My drum. But never mind. Er—well—oh yes. —— it, I wish you'd give me something. But, of course, you can't—here. I mean I boggle so. Don't you notice it?"

"A little. Take your time, old man."

"Malaria, I suppose. And my quinine ran out some time ago."

"Oh, I shall be glad to let you have some."

"Let me have some?" The eyes stared at the little doctor. "That's good—all right. I'll go on. By the way, did you say you were Jesus?"

"No; Magdalen."

Warren-Dukely smiled at the fire and puffed at his cigar, seeming to have forgotten his guest. The pulse of the drum was so faint that it appeared like the strokes of an invisible baton conducting the nocturnal anthem. A cricket shrilled piercingly and ceased. A distant prolonged yowl was just audible. The doctor was watching Warren-Dukely with professionally keen eyes; he observed certain spasmodic twitches of the bare toes and a persistent scratching at the chair arm with one polished finger-nail.

"I guess I must have been before your time, anyway," he said conversationally.

"Eh?" The start was convulsive. He stared at the doctor; then the eyes smiled. "Oh, I beg your pardon. One gets to dreaming—more or less. Er—what the mischief was I gassing about?"

"You were going to tell me how you became King of the Wood."

"King of the Wood? Did I say that—really? This cigar seems awful strong, by the way. Still, years since I smoked one."

Suddenly he sprang to his feet and, bending over the doctor's chair, touched his bare hand as he picked up the calabash. He stood with the water in his hand and smiled down at the visitor in a relieved manner.

"I wonder whether you could spare?" he insinuated.

"I don't think you had better," observed the doctor quietly. "A little later perhaps. You're not accustomed to it, y'know."

"Quite right! Quite right! And you'll need it yourself. I'd forgotten that."

"I'll need it? Oh, you mean—it isn't that. I've a good supply with me."

"So had I, old boy; so had I," muttered Warren-Dukely as he turned away with the calabash of water in his hand. By the chair he stopped, glanced at it and threw

it away irritably. "—— it, I continually do that. Carry things about. Still what does it matter?"

Sticking the cigar in his mouth, he began to pace up and down before the fire, staring at the ground. The doctor did not disturb him. Presently he began with a jerk:

"I'VE got it, by Jove. I know. I began yarning about that first expedition, didn't I? Well, after that Africa seemed to get in my blood. I broke off the engagement with Sybil. Had to, only decent thing to do. Can't expect a woman to wait—like a sergeant's wife? An' one can't drag her around here, eh? 'Sides, I'm not a marrying man. Never was. Poor old Sybby. I wonder whether she's still running the Cheshire?

"Oh well, on the second trip I had a mania to come through Tchad, pick up Boyd Alexander's trail—poor old boy—and zigzag down through the Albert Lakes and land eventually in Rhodesia. I circled Tchad and went off to the Dinka country. Told you all that though, didn't I? Well, never mind. I tacked back here an' barged into old Basayaguru as you did, eh? An' the —— old cutthroat made me King of the Wood!"

He stopped to raise his head and emit that throaty chuckle. The doctor, watching him keenly, began to revise his opinion of his sanity. He wheeled round, one hand stuck under the tails of his coat and the other holding the cigar.

"Bally idiot, ain't I?" he demanded. "You wait, ol' boy! Your inning's next for King of the Wood." He barked rather than laughed this time.

"Still, I've played the game, —— your eyes!" He appeared to be addressing somebody unseen, but he said, "No, I mean you, Doc." He began to pace again moodily. "Sorry, ol' chap," he said as abruptly. "You'll understand as soon as I can spit it out. I say, the old boy's very generous with his ivory an' stuff, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"H'm. Thought so. Invited you to witness the Marriage of the Sacred Tree, didn't he?"

"Y-yes," admitted the little doctor, wondering why he felt uneasy.

"Same hellish trick. Still, it would have been the same anyway. How many men have you, Doc?"

"Twenty-five. Three canoes."

"All armed?"

"Well—Sniders enough for all of 'em, but——"

"Oh pish!" he waved an impatient hand. "What bally rot I'm talking. Isn't a dog's chance. My dear old boy, I had fifty—all armed with Martinis."

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

"Good God, of course you don't! I say, know anything about folklore?"

"A little."

"Talked about the Sacred Tree, didn't they?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's the bloody thing there!" He raised a hand to the giant tree above him. "Mother of all an' has to have a husband every year."

"So I understand. My head man, Ali Mohammed, told me that they have muddled some ancient Arab philosophy with their own superstitions. Very interesting ceremony, I should imagine."

"Interestin' ceremony! ——!"

Agitatedly the tall man began to pace up and down before the fire again, sucking fiercely at the stump of the cigar.

"I'm to be the —— thing's husband," he jerked out.

"Indeed," said the doctor interestedly, for he knew of many ceremonies prevalent in Europe as elsewhere of the symbolical marriage of a girl to a tree. Then suddenly, "Oh, you mean that they've kept you here a prisoner for this ceremony of theirs? But that's nonsense. I mean of course I'll help you to——"

Warren-Dukely wheeled upon him swiftly and, pointing his cigar at him, cried:

"But you —— fool. I've told you you're trapped for the next husband."

"Husband!" repeated the little doctor bewilderedly.

"Yes, yes."

"But what—what happens to you?"

"Me? I'm sacrificed to this confounded *ju-ju*. Are you blind? The night of the marriage orgy they carve me up, wipe out your camp and stick you here to make magic for twelve moons."

"My God!" ejaculated the little doctor, half rising to his feet.

VI

WARREN-DUKELY hurled his cigar stump into the fire, turned on his heel and flung his body into his chair. The doctor remained for a moment, staring incredulously; then, as if he had grasped the import of the man's words and had decided that they were sane, he stood up abruptly and came over to Warren-Dukely.

"This—this seems incredible! In the twentieth century! I——"

The polished nails gleamed in the fire-light as the delicate hand patted the doctor's arm half-caressingly, half-reassuringly.

"It isn't, my dear old boy; this isn't! It's before the flood. Sit down, Doc; I feel better now I've got that off my chest. For twelve moons I've been dying to tell a white man that! My God!"

"But—is it true?" demanded the doctor, conscious of the fingers spasmodically clutching his arm.

"It's true, all right; true as death!" The eyes gleamed as the beard emitted the throaty chuckle. "Sit down, old boy."

Doctor Herdwether returned to his chair confusedly, unable yet to decide whether or no the story was the result of a disordered brain. Warren-Dukely dragged over his chair close beside the doctor's and leaned forward.

"My brain's all right now, Doc. Er—forgive me, but I can't resist touching you—to see if you're there, y'know. By the way, that's why I dress sometimes. Just to try to keep myself sane. Helps. Can't fool around all day an' night doin' nothin'. I mean even cleanin' oneself an' pretendin' things keeps—oh, reminds one of what one was. Otherwise—well, it isn't done, is it? Not playing the game."

"But if—what you inferred—we might escape—ought not to lose any time."

"Time! You dear old thing! I've been sitting here for twelve moons wastin' time, ain't I? This is an island: crocs all round."

"But I've got a canoe!" exclaimed the doctor. "I came in it."

"Really? An' what the blazes 's the good of that? I tried, old boy. You bet your life I did. I hadn't got a canoe, but I got across on a log in spite of the bloody crocs. I wished I hadn't. They got me three days—or centuries—later. I dunno. Want to live in the jungle, eh?"

"God!" said the doctor and shuddered. "But we could make my camp an'——"

"Your camp! In the village, isn't it? 'Sides, did you blaze your trail here, eh? Which direction did you come from?" The little doctor made an inarticulate noise as he glanced over his shoulder. "No, it wasn't that way. That's where the village is. And, I say, for how long d'you think we two an' your twenty-five rats could put up a scrap against the mob? My dear old boy, we haven't got a dog's chance. I've known it for twelve moons. Come, buck up' an' we'll have a chat before we go—or rather I go! But I'm not goin' that way, by God! Playing the game or not!"

"What do you mean?"

One long arm shot up like a salute to the great bough above them.

"You'll see in daylight. Has a pod thing. Poison."

"But—but—" exclaimed the doctor, jumping to his feet.

"But! But!" mocked Warren-Dukely harshly. "What the devil's the use of butting? We're not goats. 'Sides, I've butted for twelve bloody moons. Come, old boy, let's have a drink, an'—an' we'll toddle along to Stone's an' finish up at the Empire! ——! Sit down, man!"

Suddenly he sprang to his height and slapped the doctor on the shoulder so that he sat down hurriedly. Then, tilting the opera hat upon the side of his head like a comedian, he lifted up his beard toward the moon and trolled in a husky tenor:

"Come, landlord, fill the flowing bowl until it doth
run over—ove-er!
For tonight we'll merry, merry be!
For tonight we'll merry, merry be!
For tonight we'll merry, merr-y b-e-e-!
Tomorrow we'll be so-ber!"

At the last word he snatched off his hat and stood bareheaded in the moonlight as the forest answered coldly—

"O-be-r."

"Listen!" he cried, gesturing largely. "There's my faithful pal! Never goes back. Always agrees with me! The only English voice I've heard for fourteen moons! Come on, old boy! Let's have a drink. God knows I'm dry enough! ——!" he exclaimed, crushing the hat beneath his arm

and bowing satirically to the doctor. "For God's sake, buck up! I'm neither drunk nor crazy! But, Lord, you're the first entertainment I've had for twelve moons! Fourteen moons! Moon! Moons! Moons! Nothing but moons! Wilde knew —— little about moons to what I know! I've watched; I've studied; I've wooed—every bloody one of the fourteen moons!"

"Sit down!" said the doctor sharply.

"Eh."

The tall figure wheeled toward him.

"Sit down, and we'll have a drink. But don't get excited."

"Excited! You dear old duck, I haven't had such a time since ma died!"

The hat went careering wildly through the moonlight, turned a somersault and settled drunkenly on one rim. Warren-Dukely dragged his chair a foot, lumped into it and caught his hand to his eyes.

"Sorry, old man; I'll be good. Fire ahead with that drink though." Then in a dreary voice as the doctor pulled out the flask, "You know you haven't an idea as to what this means to me. One gets used to anything in life. But—well, I did want to speak to a white man once more. Tribal, of course, but—" He dropped his hand to watch at the gurgle of liquid. "You know, Doc, old pal, I'm so —— glad to see you! I feel like a bally woman welcomin' her lover an' all that sort of thin'. I'm glad, but I guess you ain't."

"Here, drink this, and you'll feel better," said the doctor, proffering the screw-cap.

"Thanks!" Warren-Dukely gulped the liquor at a draft. "Lord, how it bites! Now you have a drink, an' I'll try to tell you what sort of a picnic you're in for. Oh, thanks a million times!"

He accepted the cigar, lighted it with a brand, leaned back and puffed reflectively. The distant anthem pulsed steadily. A night-bird squawked persistently. The faint vibration of the drum just reached them. After lighting his cigar, the doctor said quietly:

"You know, Dukely, I can't quite realize this. I——"

"Of course, you can't! It's taken me twelve moons to realize it. Oh, —— those moons."

"No; I mean there must be some way out of it. We can't be murdered by these savages."

"I object, I admit." The throaty chuckle was repeated. "Now let me tell you, an' then you'll understand, I'll guarantee. Er. H'm. My mind's foggin' again. Oh, yes, I know."

He stared up at the sinister boughs of the giant tree. The eyes hardened.

The nervous twitching of the fingers began again.

"Yes, I think I can do it. You need it, anyhow—to understand." He leaned forward, kicked the embers of the fire into a blaze and plunged abruptly:

"I told you how they caught me, eh? With the same trick of apparent friendliness. Invited me to the show, y'know. Very well. Two days before that drum there began. Sound physiological idea. Works 'em up. All right. On the openin' night I was led here an' given an orchestra stall while the orchestra was tunin' up. Same moon. Same tree. Whole crowd of 'em here. Mumblin' an' chantin' just beyond there in the open space. Old chief on his bally throne thing an' the young 'un. Master of ceremonies—your pal— Yes, I'll bet he's been your special friend, eh? With his head-dress—looked like a lord mayor's hat.

"Well, whole bunch of young girls an' my illustrious predecessor, the King of the Wood. He sat beneath the tree there just outside the gate. Of course, I didn't twig the game—then. D'you see 'em in the moonlight? Then that —— drumming—all the time—persistent—seemed to get in your bally head, y'know, or your veins—heart. I felt excited myself. Seen various sort of dances before an' all that. But—somehow this was different. Real thing, I suppose.

"Sort of thing they never do for white men except when they're—they're to be the *pièce de résistance*, y'know. But I didn't. They had told me somethin' about the principle of the thing: the marriage of the husband person—a great big devil by the way, more negro than these people. Came from the Kameroons, I believe; prisoner of war. They have an amusing idea that the bigger the man the more the lady—I mean the tree—is pleased. More power, I suppose. Of course, white man an' white magic an' all that.

"Well, they kept up this —— drumming an' wrigglin' about—usual witch-doctor business—for the devil of a time. Drinkin' all the time native beer, y'know.

Fermented corn. Then the girls' stomach-dances an' all that. Meanwhile the big feller sat up there in the shadow of the tree, sulky, silent. God knows whether he knew what was coming. I began to get bored." Again that throaty chuckle with a harsh rasp to it. "God—see the same old thing all over again. Then, just as the moon spilled over that big bough there and covered the big negro, there came a change. That must have been the mystic sign, I suppose.

"Well, your pal, Yamala, prancing about suddenly ceased his croonin' row and darted at the fellow, together with a crowd of other black devils. I heard the scream. I didn't realize what. They had him stripped over there in the moonlight—an' a knife—old Yamala." The beard jerked as if he were biting his lips.

"God—I've seen things. Of course, you're a doctor an' used to carvin'—but, God, it would have made you sick." Again he moved restlessly in his chair. "They cut him alive—screeches—poor devil—then they—they put it up there." He actually pointed to the exact spot. Up there in the fork of that bough. See? I vomited."

The hum of the insectile anthem continued remorselessly to the beat of the invisible baton. A cricket sang a shrill solo and ceased. Far away was the effect of sorrow in a hyena. Only one cigar glowed like the fierce eye of a dragon. From the doctor came an inarticulate noise.

VII

WARREN-DUKELY stooped for a brand to relight his cigar. He puffed thirstily.

"Twelve moons ago. The Cycle eh? Still. Well, then I wanted to go. My head man was with me—poor devil! They were too busy to notice me. Then—I went off and down to the canoes. But there weren't any canoes—at least not where we had landed. They must have hidden them somewhere else on the island. Of course, I didn't know then that it was an island. Well, I was in a —— of a rage. I came blunderin' back here. Blood-drunk an' crazy. Orgy, of course.

"Just over there cookin' parts of the body on great fires. Blood an' hair and women all over the place. Saturnalia. I might as well have expected a rational answer from a lunatic asylum. My boy was gone. I wish to God I'd shot 'em. I couldn't have got 'em all, of course, but most of 'em before they had come to their senses. But I didn't know. I cleared off an' walked about all night. Then—of course, I had not a notion—what—what—well, you know now.

"I came back in the dawn. The drums were going. Some still dancin' like stuffed vultures. Others gorged, slept. They made me sick. I went off an' sat under a tree—that one over there. I decided to clear out next day, as I couldn't undertake to wipe out the tribe. Yet I recollect that I thought what a toppin' account it would make in a book. Queer ideas one gets—when Fate's playin' round. Oh God! Y'know, Doc, I've wondered sometimes—since—when I've been wooin' the moon there, whether we aren't all merely characters—an' —— rotten ones mostly, eh? In a book? What? But, Lord, I'd like to get my hands on my author who put me here—an' you. Sorry."

He ceased abruptly, puffed twice and shot out—

"Well, what are you goin' to do about it, Doc?"

"I really don't know." The little doctor's voice had lost the irritable note; he appeared to have regained his consulting-room tone—suave, impersonal. "But what did you do then—in the morning?"

"I do? —— an' Tommy, what d'you think I could do? They pinched my rifle while I slept. Then they trotted me up to this place. Oh yes, I objected. Still, they were an ugly crowd, an' lots of 'em. Of course, I didn't know what was up at the time. As a matter of fact they flung me in here and then skedaddled. I roamed around to find out that the darned place was an island. Among other things I found were about a couple of dozen heads of my men, on the trees down there, courteous reminder, y'know.

"They starved me for three days, an' then I began to find goats left in the stockade here while I was away huntin' round for some one to kill. After about ten days of that sort of thing, I dunno—they brought one of my men in a canoe an' made him interpret for me. Of course, I got as mad as —— when the feller told me about the husband business of the magic tree an' all that. He said they had all been wiped—except himself—and eaten.

"After that I tried to escape. I told you, eh? That cured me—or broke me. I dunno. I was delirious when they brought me back here. I pulled through an' found all my gear here—more or less—except guns. The other things they thought were magic an' were scared to interfere with 'em, even the whisky, thank Heaven."

"The whisky?" queried the doctor sharply. "Didn't they drink that?"

"No. Brought up all, nearly all, my gear except my rifles. Didn't know what whisky was probably—or thought it was magic stuff."

"Oh," commented the doctor. "Um. Um. I say, how about your medicine-chest? Have you got it still?"

"Oh yes; quinine all finished."

"Um. How about opium?"

"Finished, too. You see, old boy, that was rather useful sometimes—when the whisky had run out. Gives you sleep at at any rate."

"Got any aconite?"

"No."

"Laudanum?"

"Finished, too. Partly for same reason; also had dysentery, y'know. Why?"

"Why because I don't intend to provide a post-mortem lecture for your witch-doctor friend."

"Oh, well you'll have twelve moons to think it over."

"Nonsense."

Warren-Dukely yawned lazily.

"You'll find out, old boy, same as I did. A year of contemplation sobers you up a bit. What's it matter after all? I don't care what they do afterward."

"Look here, Dukely; get that out of your mind."

"That's all right, Doc. You're fresh an' eager—same as I was then. I was mad to see a white once more. An' you've given me that. Of course, I'm sorry that you'll have to pay such a price for my amusement, but,—— it, old man, I didn't lug you here, did I? I wish you better luck than I've had. By the way, you'll find in my effects various letters an' things for my people. An', Doc, if God's kinder to you than He is to me, I want you not to give away the cheap horrors to—to my own people and pals, an' don't let the papers get hold of the yarn.

"I'm not dancin' round in hell to make a journalists' holiday. All details of my trip an' notes on customs, particularly the legends an' practises among our dear friends here, are together in the canvas-covered book addressed to the R. G. S." He glanced at the doctor, who was leaning forward, elbows on knees, staring fixedly at embers. "Don't seem interested, eh, Doc? You're right. Talkin' rot, ain't I? I mean, how the blazes 're you goin' to get 'em out yourself? I tried—all sorts of crazy ideas.

"Put notes in bottles an' chucked 'em in the swamp. Island don't touch the main stream; of course they stopped there—unless old Surgeon Yamala has found 'em an' turned 'em into *ju-ju* medicine or somethin'. Well, I'm goin' to turn in. Get plenty of rest for the show tomorrow night—or is it today." He glanced at the moon. "No; can't be more than eleven. Ha! All the theaters comin' out, eh? Poor old Piccadilly. Recollect that night I was chucked out of the Empire! Ah well—I can give you a dose on the floor, Doc, same as me."

"SIT down," snapped the doctor as he began to rise from his chair. "I've got an idea."

"Sweet infant! So had I by the dozen. Brilliant ideas every ten minutes. I know."

"Shut up and sit down!"

"All right, old man. I'm not pressed for time. Fire ahead!"

"Look here; as far as I can make out from what you tell me and what I've seen, we may have a sportin' chance."

"—— sportin'!"

"Shut up, Dukely! You're fagged. With twelve months of this an' fever an' all that your nerves are in a rotten condition, naturally; your constitution's undermined, which affects your will. You see things——"

"See things! Oh my hat!"

"I said see things as they are not. Now try to pull yourself together an' answer my questions."

"Certainly, old boy. Fire ahead!"

"Sit up in your chair with your head forward and your back stiff, Dukely," commanded the doctor. "Get that spineless despair out of your mind—just for five minutes—and I'll give you a tonic that'll buck you up. That's it! Now! What time exactly do they begin the—the show?"

"Eight-thirty; early doors seven!"

"Don't be a —— fool, Dukely. I'm serious."

"Sorry, old boy; thought it was a joke!"

"Well, what time? Before sunset or after?"

"At the rising of the moon. But what that's got to——"

"Shut up and listen! Do they start drinking immediately?"

"You bet they do!"

"Good. What's the beer kept in? Large calabashes?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"All over the place. Mostly near the tree."

"When do they bring the beer?"

"Bring the beer? Why several days beforehand. Has to settle, y'know."

"Is it here now, then?"

"Yes." Dukely gestured behind him. "At the back of my hut there. Gallons of the stuff."

"Um." The little doctor wriggled slightly. "Now about this tree. What is it?"

"The magic tree. Tree of Life they call it."

"You said it was poisonous?"

"Yes."

"Of what species is it?"

"I dunno. Seems to be of the same family as the baobab—Andansonia, y'know. But yet quite unlike the baobabs of the South. Never seen one like it before."

"Um. *Citric tribasic*," muttered the doctor. "No good." He stared up at the great boughs and, jumping to his feet in his nervous manner, went across and began to pick at the bark of the great bole. "That's not Andansonia!" he commented with a leap in his voice as he returned to his chair. "Don't know what it is. Unclassified, I should say."

"No, I don't think it's baobab. Wouldn't be poisonous if it were."

"Do they ever use it?"

"Yes. On the—husband. They say that it is the blood of the mother which he must eat before he is—married."

"Ah! What's the effect?"

"Oh God, Doc, that's what I want to know. They—they don't give the poor devil a chance to die. The stuff of the pod is thrust down his throat an' then—what I described. But what's the scheme? Shove it in the beer an' poison the swine? My hairy aunt!" Dukely leaped to his feet with a yell. "You've got it, by God, old man!"

"Wait a minute," said the doctor quietly. "Not so fast."

"By God, I feel alive once more! We must do it, Doc. That'll fix them."

"That's the—sit down, Dukely. The point is: will it fix 'em? How do we know what poison it is? What quantity is required to produce the desired effect?"

"Oh the devil! Oh, it must."

"Desire has no effect on organic matter, my friend. Um. Um. Haven't got any animals around here to experiment on?"

"Not a thing. They bring me food every morning: fowls and sometimes goats but always ready killed."

"Um. Wish to heaven we knew what family it is." He stared at the great tree by which the moon in midarc was almost obscured. "Have you got anything to knock down one of these pods?"

"No, but I've some here," said Warren-Dukely, fumbling in his pocket. "I—I thought they might be useful in case anything happened before schedule, y'know."

The doctor took one, split it open and examined the contents: seeds embedded in a yellowish creamy matter.

"Um. Um," he muttered, sniffing it. "Wonder what the devil it can be. The odor seems familiar. Very. What the—— if I know. Tastes sweetish," he added putting a grain upon his tongue-tip.

"For God's sake be careful, old man!" cried Warren-Dukely.

The doctor held the pod in one hand and stared at the moonlit glade.

"If only I could think what that reminds me of. I might get a clue. I've half a mind to try. Have you any mustard for an emetic?"

"Don't be crazy, Doc! And I haven't any, anyway. It may be anything; maybe the stuff some of these devils poison their arrows with. I know that's a vegetable poison of some sort and absolutely deadly."

"True!"

"Besides, if it takes a long time, the actual knowledge won't do us any good. I mean that's our only chance either way."

"True again. What time do they come in with food?"

"Sunrise or before."

"Well, we'll have to take the chance, that's all. Come, we must fix up the stuff

now. Grind it up, I suppose, as much as possible, and stick it in their beer. Thank heaven it's sweetish. They probably won't notice it or rather like the sweet effect. How much have you got there of the stuff?"

"Oh, only about a handful, I thought that would be enough for me."

"Put that idea out of your head," said the doctor sharply. "Now come along. I'll bunk you up on that bough and you grab the pods. About a quarter of a pound per gallon ought to be enough. If it were aconite, it would knock 'em stiff at the first gulp."

Into the gloom of the great tree's interior disappeared the coat-tails of Warren-Dukely, looking like some monstrous white-breasted bird clumsily seeking to roost.

VIII

AS A lover hastens to a tryst, so rose the sun and rising seemed to dally in the pleasance of his love. With the hot kiss upon the dew-tipped crest of the giant tree the two white men hustled the last of the empty pods into the latrine behind the hut. Just as a bird raucously announced the capture of his prey to his nearby mate, Warren-Dukely, peering through the fence, saw the first of the six young girls who daily brought his food, for to a layman or woman of the age of puberty was it worse than death to come within the orbit of the sacred magician's sight, the husband of the Tree of Life, arbiter of fecundity in crops and women, mother of all, potent and terrible.

Across the glade they came: lithe young forms of ebony moving lissomely from their slender waists, bearing upon their immobile heads a slain goat, chickens and calabashes of sweet water, milk and eggs—for must the holy mate of the goddess be propitiated and fed sumptuously to avoid his great displeasure.

"Better lie perdue, Doc," warned Warren-Dukely, "while I find out whether they know where you are or not—that's if these children know."

At the entrance to the palisade the six stooped and, having placed the loads upon the ground, called shrilly the prescribed greeting. Dukely replied. One responded in the chanting speech which was obligatory in addressing a sacred person. Then in single file they turned and glided down the glade as if well content to have completed their dangerous duties.

"As I thought, old man," reported Dukely, returning into the hut with the groceries. "They know that you're here. And, by way of precaution, I instructed 'em to tell our invaluable friend, Yamala, that I had summoned you, my brother, to take my place after I had—entered into connubial felicity."

"D'you think they'll swallow that?" inquired the little doctor, squatted upon an overturned calabash, stroking his beard.

"Oh Lord, yes! You haven't learned as I have the great prestige of a medicine-man. They will expect crops an' what not as never before by the union of such a great white magician as I. God, so thoughtful, too! I even provide a successor as mighty!"

"Why," demanded the doctor with a calabash of milk in his hands, "don't they cultivate the glade here near to the source of magic power? Seems queer."

"Oh no. They dare not do that. The island is sacred, as I've told you. They seem to look upon the ground here as a part of the body of the great mother and 're scared to hurt her feelings by scratchin' her skin. That's the idea as I've understood."

"H'm, homeopathic magic as usual."

Dukely sank down upon the camp-bed.

"Phew! I'm fagged out. Sorry, old man," he added swiftly, "I'm forgettin' my duties. You must be starving. There's some cold goat in that calabash beside you an' some cornbread of a sort—sourdough, y'know. When you've eaten, we'd better have a sleep. You must need it, by Jove—so's we'll be fit for the—Diamond Sculls tonight," he added with a chuckle that was less harsh. "Oh, by the way, we'll need your gun, Doc; so let me have it, and I'll toddle along an' hide it in a bough near where I know now the canoes will be. We can pick it up as we go."

"Good. And you may as well take these few cartridges in case they should take a fancy to them, eh?"

As soon as he had gone with the rifle and the belt, the little doctor, whose curiosity had been excited by the first glimpse of the interior of the hut by daylight, rose to note the contents. At one end was the camp-bed with a bepatched mosquito-net; in the middle, facing the door, was a chair beside a crude bookcase of shelves formed

of sapling logs burned off and strung together with bark fiber, containing about a dozen volumes, of which the most conspicuous were a volume of the Royal Geographical Society's journals, a Swinburne and a Rabelais and some chunky volumes bound in canvas; at the far end was a green canvas table on which, set in orderly array before a shaving-mirror, were a number of small objects which gleamed in the half-light.

Chewing a rib of goat, the doctor rose stealthily for a surreptitious peep at a complete manicure-set and hair-brushes in ivory, gold inlaid. As he handled them curiously, he observed on each one a crest of what appeared to be a naked scimitar blade clasped by a mailed hand. The little man took the bone from the nest of his beard to grin as he remarked:

"Totemism! Complete case. Most interesting, bless the dear! No wonder they wanted him for a medicine-man!"

The sound of the balks of the gate being dropped into place sent him scuttling back guiltily to his seat on the calabash.

"Do yourself well!" he observed as Dukely entered.

"Oh yes. But, by the Lord, Doc, old man, if it hadn't been for my pals there, I couldn't have stood it. My God, no!" The expression in his eyes as they glanced at the primitive library was almost like a dog who knew he is about to be parted from his master. He swore quietly and remarked, "D'you know, Doc, the hardest thing's goin' to be to leave my pals there tonight."

"Rot," said the doctor with the rib of goat in his beard. "You can get other editions." But with a glance at the bulky canvas books, "It does seem a pity to leave these note-books. They are, aren't they? Um."

Warren-Dukely sighed as he stretched himself on the bed.

"Queer," he observed, staring at the grass roof, "a while ago I was willing to—oh, cut a dean's throat to get out of this hell, an' now, when I think I'm good as free, I'm wanting to raise Cain 'cause I can't take my worldly goods an' chattels with me."

"Human nature, ol' boy," commented the doctor, chewing away as contentedly as a terrier at the bone.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, ol' man!" suddenly cried Dukely, springing from his bed. "Look here, you make yourself comfortable here! Yes, yes. Courtesy goes to the devil an' all here!"

"Umgh, Umgh," grunted the doctor through his bone. "Sit down an' don't be a fool. I'm all right."

"No, no." Dukely dragged one yellow pillow from the bed and sprawled on the floor. "Turn in when you feel like it. Anyway, as soon as you've finished sitting on my wardrobe, I'll change. They'd probably put me in gaol at Kavaballa's if I arrived in this kit!" he added with a slight return of the hysterical note in his voice.

THE doctor, who appeared to have lost every trace of his normal irritability, did not dispute the point but, having finished another bone and drunk some more milk, rolled on to the bed and was asleep in five minutes. Flies buzzed in freedom, walked upon the doctor's nose and danced upon his eyelids with impunity; they essayed to hold a carnival upon the long figure in khaki crouched upon the floor but were repulsed by the bony hand of perfect nails. Shadows dwindled toward the west. Parrots began to squawk; a wart-hog and his family nosed inquisitively around the palisade and went a truffling farther up the glade.

Hornets played busily between the forest and a nest of clay beneath the eaves. A lizard progressed in suspicious darts across the earthen floor, reached the calabash of goat abandoned by the doctor and feasted most lizardly upon the swarming flies. Suddenly a streak of cobalt blue struck the empurpled lizard like dulled lightning, and a small snake, startled by a throttled gurgle, slithered into a hollow in the wattle and daub wall. From the southern end of the glade parrots streamed, screeching a pessimistic warning.

Warren-Dukely stirred and arose as his keen ears caught a distant chanting. He awoke the slumbering doctor.

"What the—" mumbled the doctor resentfully. "Oh." He sat up abruptly. "Oh Lord, yes, I'd forgotten. What's the matter?"

"Curtain's going up, old man. Pull yourself together. You stop here an' don't come out unless I call. I've got to go an' parley with our pal, Yamala. He's chanting Gilbert an' Sullivan stuff down there

at the end of the grove."

"What! Are they beginning already?"

"Not until sunset. My magic is too powerful for any except the anointed sorcerers or whatever you like to call 'em while the sun is up. Then the crowd comes with a rush, an' they start with a song an' dance act."

"But—Dukely, d'you think that they've already wiped out my camp? That Arab of mine, Ali, will put up a fight if he gets any warning, an' he's no slouch."

"God knows! Perhaps they'll bring him up to see the show an'—or—else they may take it into their heads to keep him for the next year's magician—particularly if he's a pure-blooded Arab; that is, looks it."

"Um. If he knows, he'll fight like a wild-cat. Fine chap, Ali, even if he is tiresome sometimes." A smile twitched the doctor's shaggy eyebrows. "I hope they do bring him along if only to see a carven image get excited for once. Dear me, how sentimental one becomes in post-mortem contemplation."

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Dukely sharply. Then, turning away abruptly, "Look here, I'll toddle along!"

As he strode from the hut, the little doctor watched him keenly.

"Um," he remarked *sotto voce*, "careless of me—very. Nerves in rags. Still, rather natural. Um. That food and sleep did me good though." His eyes wandered over the ground and alighted on an empty pod of the Tree of Life. He picked it up and sniffed at it again. "Queer, familiar odor." He stared reflectively at the glare of sunshine without. "—— if I can recall what it reminds me of. Um."

From without came Warren-Dukely's voice pitched in the high native chant. As it ceased, above the recurring buzz of flies came the response like a thin streak of troubled sound from a distance. The doctor moved toward the door and saw the bearded white man turn away from the fence to regard the giant tree; he noted a certain rigidity in the body and the clenching of the fists. The doctor dodged back swiftly as Warren-Dukely came to the hut.

"Come on, old man!" he shouted a trifle boisterously. "It's about an hour to sunset. Let's feed, an' I'll fry some eggs an' goat. We can stuff 'em in our pockets for the trip tonight." Averting his eyes, he plumped down into the chair by the library. "An', by God, we mustn't forget to stir up the beer before—before the bar opens!"

"Certainly," assented the doctor, "an', talkin' about bars, there's another wee droppie left, laddie!"

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Dukely. "Let's drink to—to the holy estate of matrimony, by the Lord!"

"Um," reflected the little doctor as he unscrewed the flask, "he's fightin' it through, but he may collapse on my hands at any moment. Confound it, what does that stuff remind me of?"

IX

IN A field of malachite within a cañon of the basalt forest before the domed majesty of the Tree of Life was spread a quivering fan of ebony, whose writhing squirming figures were sheened in the blue flood of the moon. In the center upon a carven stool was draped the girth of the chief, Basayaguru; upon his left squatted his son, Basafingu, and upon his right, a bearded face of ivory and jet, squatted the little doctor beside the immobile carving in turquoise of Ali Mohammed.

Before them pranced Yamala, smeared in clay, a frenzied skeleton of chalcedony from whose high-crested head streamed a pennant of red parrot feathers, dancing in the humid air as if in wild pursuit of the glittering snake which was the sacred spear, to the screeching chant and the throb of the drums. Beyond him, beneath the great bough in the blue womb of the tree, was the glimmer of a white body crouching.

Around a wriggling group of the six doomed and holy maidens leaped the men and shuffled the women, grunting and squealing to the impulse of the drums. On every side like giant mushrooms stood the great calabashes of the beer from which he who willed could drink his fill.

"God," muttered the doctor, nervously plucking at his beard, "when is this confounded stuff going to work? I don't even know what reactions to look for! Ali! How far do you reckon that moonlight is from Mr. Dukely now?"

"Undoubtedly within one foot, Doctor."

The doctor glanced at the clear-cut features which were as cold as rock, and he swore resentfully.

"Dukely," shouted the doctor above the racket, "are you all right?"

"Yes," came the reply in a steady voice. "They'll get me in a minute or two."

Continuously the blue-sheened limbs pranced on; untiringly yelled hysteric voices; remorselessly the blue tide of the moon rose nearer the bole of the Tree of Life, the Mother of All, where crouched the unwilling bridegroom.

After an anxious stare about him the doctor fidgeted restlessly and gazed fascinatedly at the line of creeping moonlight.

"Is that stuff ever going to work? Ali," sharply, "d'you think we've made a mistake? Perhaps it's merely harmless—just citric acid of the baobab? Ali!"

"Allah only knows," responded Ali tonelessly.

The doctor swore and began again to pluck at his beard.

"God, this tension's—look!" he whispered and clutched at Ali's robe.

The enormous bulk of the chief, Basayaguru, beside him was heaving convulsively; the head was thrown back until the headdress was almost perpendicular, and the mouth was wide open, the jelly face creased in a thousand wrinkles; the eyes were dilated, flashing the blue whites; the blobby hands clutched at the flabby mass of the strained throat.

"He is drunk, Doctor," said Ali gravely. "He wishes to laugh—exquisitely."

"Laugh! Good God, what at?" exclaimed the doctor.

As he spoke, the ghostly figure of Yamala, the witch-doctor, doubled up in front of him, holding his sides as his open mouth gasped in a paroxysm of laughter. As suddenly as if indeed a magic wand had been waved above them, the drums ceased—the screeches died away. Five leaping warriors turned in amazement and stared. A yell was turned into a gasping sob.

Astonished the doctor stood up. Every savage except the six holy maidens was rolling about in the grass, holding his sides and gasping with laughter. The chief beside his son was kicking his fat legs like a baby hippopotamus. Into the moonlight stepped the ivory figure of the bridegroom. Several figures ceased to struggle. They lay quietly in the grass.

"For God's sake!" began Dukely. "What on earth——"

"Come!" yelled the doctor. "Run for it, Dukely, for your life! Ali!" And without explanation the doctor sprang over the squirming figure of the chief, followed by Dukely and the sedate Ali. Not until they had reached the tree where the doctor's gun was hidden did he have breath to explain.

"That smell! 'Course I knew it!" he gasped as they trotted through the forest to the canoes. "Dentist!"

"Dentist! What on earth—" panted the ghostly form of Warren-Dukely.

"Yes, yes, nitrogen monoxid—probably form—pentoxid—Laughing Gas, y'know! Asphyxiate 'em for hours—if doesn't—kill 'em! There's the canoes!"

THE CAMP-FIRE

A Free-to-all Meeting-Place for Readers Writers & Adventurers

A WORD from Clyde B. Hough concerning his story in this issue:

Oakland, Calif.

At one time I spent a little over eleven months on just such an island as is described in this story. The size of the island, the reef completely around it, the birds and eggs and the method of obtaining water, are all statements of facts. The island in the story is a true, accurate and complete reproduction of the one where I was located.—C. B. HOUGH.

HERE'S an answer to the inquiry about "Cattle Kate" from one who knew her and the circumstances of her hempen departure. Here's hoping he tells us other incidents of the old days of the West.

Denver, Colo.

Used to ramble around the map a little myself, putting in about fifteen years of my life looking for the place where the other fellow "wasn't."

SINCE settling down I get a lot of fun out of our magazine and frequently read of men I have whacked blankets with in various parts of the West. Was acquainted with a lot of the old-time gun-fighters, who, as a general rule, were quiet, unassuming men and the best of partners.

Have been intending to write a few lines to Camp-Fire for some time but kept putting it off until in a recent issue some comrade inquired for information of "Cattle Kate," and as I happened to know her and a little of her history I thought you would be interested.

KATE MAXWELL was born north of Des Moines, Iowa. Her father died when she was a little girl, her mother married again, and died when Kate was about fifteen. She continued to live with her step-dad, who abused her something shameful, until she was twenty, when she ran away from home, tackling one job after another, until she wound up in a dance-hall. Kate arrived in Wyoming and got to running with a bunch of rustlers of which she was soon the recognized leader.

I met her at her hang-out on the Sweetwater several months before she was lynched. Was about forty-five years old, with a face burnt the color of old brick, black hair streaked with gray, flying loose to the wind, a man's coat and hat, and two big forty-fives and the grit of a wildcat.

Was living with Jim Avery, who, I believe, was post-master at Sweetwater. Six other hard cases made up the gang, Kate being head and shoulders the worst of the bunch. As long as she kept to ordinary rustling the cattlemen overlooked her faults. Later she got to shooting cows and running off the dogies, and then the mob got busy.

IN THE Spring of 1899 a bunch of twenty men rode quietly up to her ranch. The gang, with the exception of Avery and her nephew, were all away. Surrounding the house, part of the crowd covered the three of them from the windows, while others broke in the door. Both Avery and Kate were unarmed, their belts hanging on the wall, so got no chance to do any shooting.

Avery quit cold, and begged, but Kate fought the whole bunch bare-handed and the boy tried to knife one and got a pistol-butt over the head and was out of it.

The two were rushed out to the corral, a wagon-tongue hoisted in the air and both hung with the same rope. It is said that Kate offered to fight the entire mob with one pistol, and was still cursing them until the rope shut her off. The rest of the gang swore vengeance, and in less than a year practically the whole mob had died with their boots on.—FRANK L. SCHOTT.

THERE follows a slightly different version of the passing of "Cattle Kate." Both the names "Avery" and "Averill" are used. And there's also a word on McCoy.

Shoshoni, Wyo.

I note in your last issue that L. B. W. wants to know something about Cattle Kate and some notorious outlaw by the name of McCoy. Jim Averill, who helped run the eighth Standard Parallel in this State, lived on the Sweetwater River, some time in the last of the 80's, with a woman by the name of Ella Watson, who had the nickname of Cattle Kate. She was a courtezan and while living with Averill plied her trade and some of the neighboring punchers and owners paid her for favors received in mavericks.

AVERY also was a land surveyor and knew too much about the choice bits of Government lands which some of the big cow outfits had fenced up. Between these two things the hatred of some of these outfits grew to such an extent that one day when Averill and Ella were going to the then new town of Casper they were ambushed on the road north of the Sweetwater and near the mouth of Dry Creek and both were hung on a tree which was still standing some four years ago.

The required coroner's inquest was held, but the paties were never prosecuted. It was a cowardly and dastardly crime. Cattle Kate was written up

in the newspapers in lurid and fanciful colors as a dashing cowgirl, dead shot and a few other things. There was nothing to that but hot air.

As for McCoy the only one answering to the description was Bob McCoy of Thermopolis, who was killed some few years ago under peculiar circumstances. He was shot by unknown parties; his body then dragged to the river edge and a nosebag strapped around his head and then the body as far as the shoulders put under water. Bob was supposed to be pretty swift in the use of a rope. Otherwise he was not a particularly hard citizen.—.—.—.

WOULDN'T it be a sort of good idea for our magazine to have a kind of emblem or sign or whatever you want to call it? An "Adventure, its Mark" affair? Might use it on its stationery some day, and

there are various little purposes for which it might come in handy. Tried it out, for example, on the preceding page. Here it is in large size—a kind of coat-of-arms arrangement. Does it get by?

OUR Camp-Fire is the best agency in existence for collecting hitherto unpublished chanteys, ballads and other sea-songs and rescuing them before they are lost forever. It's another job for us, and one as interesting as it is worth while.

We have been fortunate in getting, to aid us in this work, the friendly cooperation of John F. Lomax, who is perhaps the best authority on this subject. With him as guide and expert we can be sure that what we collect will be assessed at its right and full value.

Whenever any of you sends in a hitherto unpublished chantey or sea-song or a ballad of the Great Lakes or Erie Canal we'll try to have it at our Camp-Fire for the benefit of all of us. And we hope that later on Mr. Lomax will have enough of them to embody in a book for still more permanent keeping.

Of course original productions have no place in this collection.

Some time in the future we might try our hand at collecting unpublished cowboy songs and songs of the old West in general. And perhaps the lumberjack songs some day.

Some of the songs are of course too broad to be printable, but some of these have merits that offset that point and, if you have any of the latter, no doubt Mr. Lomax will be interested in them.

FOLLOWING is a list of the *published* chanteys and songs so far as accessible in the New York Public Library. These we do *not* want. What we are after is those that have not yet been preserved in print.

If you know any that are *not* in the following list, please send them to Mr. Lomax, Y. M. C. A. Building, Austin, Texas, and he'll see that they are properly handled and classified and that the suitable ones come to us for Camp-Fire. If you can send music with words, so much the better, but for most of us that, I fear, will be impossible.

Titles are given in italics; first lines in ordinary letters. They are published in one or more of the following: *Journal of American Folk Lore:* "Old Sea Chanteys," by Bradford & Fogge; "Naval Songs," by S. B. Luce; "Sea Songs and Ballads," by Christopher Stone; "Real Sea Songs," by R. B. Whall in the *Nautical Magazine;* "A Sailor's Garland," by John Masefield; "The Chantey Man Sings," by Wm. Brown Meloney in *Everybody's* for August, 1915.

All Hands on Deck
All hands on deck, the bos'n cries.
As I Was Going
As I was going to Rigamarow
I say so, and I hope so.
Black Ball Line
In the Black Ball Line I served my time.
Black Ball Line
Come all you young fellows that follow the sea—
With a yo, ho—blow the man down.
Blow the Man Down
Blow the man down,
Blow the man down,
Way; Hi; Blow the man down.
Boney
Boney was a warrior,
Oh, aye, oh.
California
Good-by, my love, good-by,
I can not tell you why
I'm off to California
To dig the yellow gold.
Also—
Blow, boys, blow!
For California O!
We're bound for Sacramento
To dig the yellow gold.
And other forms.

Capstan Bar
Walk her round, for we're rolling homeward,
Heave, my boys together.
Come Roll Him Over
Oho, why don't you blow?
Aha, come roll him over.
Come Roll the Cotton
Come roll the cotton down, my boys,
Roll the cotton down.
Dreadnaught
There's a saucy wild packet,
And a packet of fame.
(*Several forms.*)
Give Me the Gal
Give me the gal can dance fandango
Running down to Cuba.
Hand Over Hand
A handy ship and a handy crew—
Handy, my boys, so handy.
Haul Away
Away, haul away, boys,
Haul away together.
Away, haul away, boys,
Haul away.
Haul on the Bowline
Haul on the bowline
The bully ship's a-rolling!
Haul the Bowline
Haul upon the bowline, the fore and main top bowline.
Haul the Bowline
Kitty is my darling,
Haul the bowline, haul.
High Barbery
There were two lofty ships from England came,
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed we.
Homeward Bound
Oh, to Pensacola town we'll bid adieu.
(*Used with names of any seaport.*)
Homeward Bound
We're homeward bound this very day
Good-by, fare you well.
I'll Sing You a Song
I'll sing you a song, a good song of the sea—
To my aye, heigh, blow the man down.
And I trust that you'll join in the chorus with me—
Give me some time to blow the man down.
It's Time for Us to Leave Her
Oh, the times are hard and the wages low.
Leave her, Johnny, leave her.
Knock a Man Down
I wish I was a Mobile Bay
Wey, hey, knock a man down.
Let the Bulgine Run
Oh, the wildest packet you can find—
Oh, he! Oh, ha! Are you 'most done?
Is the *Margaret Evans* of the Black X Line.
Clear the rail! Let the Bulgine run.
Liverpool Jack
Oh, Liverpool Jack with your tarpaulin hat,
Amelia, where you bound to?
Long Time Ago
A long, long time and a long time ago—
For me, way, hey, Ohio!
Long Time Ago
I wish to God I'd never been born,
To me way, hay, hay, yah!
Lowlands
I dreamt a dream the other night.
Lowlands, lowlands, hurrah, my John!
Lowlands
I thought I heard the old man say
Lowlands, lowlands my Johnny.
Maid of Amsterdam
In Amsterdam there dwelt a maid—
Mark well what I do say!
Or
And her you ought to see!
My Sal
My Sal, she's a 'Badian bright mulatto.
Wa-ay sing Sallie!
Oh, Betsy Baker
Oh, Betsy Baker!
Heigh ho!
Oh, Polly Brown
Oh, Polly Brown, I love your daughter,
Away my rolling river!
Oh, Shake Her Up
Oh, shake her up from down below,
So handy, my boys, so handy!
Ol' Joe
Ol' Joe, bully ol' Joe:
Hi, pretty yaller girl.
Oh, Blow
Oh, blow ye winds, I long to hear you,
Blow, bullies, blow.
Our Anchor We'll Weigh
Our anchor we'll weigh and our sails we will set,
Good-by, fare ye well!
Paddy Come Work on the Railway
In eighteen sixty-three
I came across a stormy sea.
Paddy Doyle
To my
Aye!
And we'll furl!
Aye!
And pay Paddy Doyle for his boots.
Outward Bound
We're outward bound from New York town,
Heave bullies, heave and pawl!
Johnny Boker
Oh, do my Johnny Boker,
Come rock and roll me over.
Poor Old Joe
Old Joe is dead and gone to hell.
We say so, and we hope so!
Ratcliffe Highway (*Or any seaport street*)
As I was a walking down Ratcliffe Highway,
Away, hay, blow the man down!
Reuben Ranzo
Oh, my poor Reuben Ranzo,
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo.
Rio Grande
I'll sing you a song of the fish of the sea,
Rolling Rio Grande!
Rio Grande
Where are you going, my pretty maid?
Oh, away, Rio.
Rio Grande
I'm bound away this very day!
Oh, you Rio!
Roll and Go
There was a ship, she sailed to Spain,
O roll and go.
Royal Artillery Man
My bleeding fancy man,
My Royal Artillery man,
He—wears—spurs.
Runaway Chorus
What shall we do with a drunken sailor?
Sally Brown
Seven long years I courted Sally
Way! High! Roll and go, oh!
Sally Brown
Oh, Sally Brown of New York City,
Aye! Aye! Roll and go!
Sally Brown
Oh, Sally Brown was a bright mulatto.
Sally Brown
I love my gal across the water.
Aye! Aye! Roll and go.
Santa Anna
Oh, Santa Anna's dead and gone.
Sebastopol
The Crimean War is over now;
Sebastopol is taken.
Shanadore (*Shenandoah*)
Shanador's a rolling river
Hurrah, you rolling river—
Shanandoah
Shanandoah, I love your daughter,
Away, ye rolling river—
Sometimes
Sometimes we're bound for England
Sometimes we're bound for France.
Heave away, my bullies, heave away.
Shallow Brown
Come get my clothes in order,
Shallow, Shallow Brown.
Shanghai Brown
O, Shanghai Brown he loves us sailors—
Blow, boys, blow.
Storm Along John
Old Stormy he is dead and gone!
To my weigh hey,
Storm along John
Susan on My Knee
'Twas on the twenty-fourth of June
I sailed away to sea.
Tommy's Gone to High Low
My Tommy's gone and I'll go too.
To my very hey hey ajola.
Whisky Johnny
Whisky is the life of man,
Whisky for Johnny!
We're All Afloat
We're all afloat in a very fine clipper,
Blow, boys, blow!

What Do You Think?
Who do you think's the skipper of her?
Blow, boys, blow!
Yankee Ship
Yankee ship come down the river,
Blow, boys, blow!

BALLADS OR FORE-BITTERS

Admiral Benbow
Oh, we sailed to Virginia and then to Fayal.
Ben Backstay
Ben Backstay was a boatman.
Ben Block
Ben Block was a veteran of naval renown.
Billy Taylor
Billy Taylor was a brisk young sailor.
Board of Trade Ahoy!
I'm only a sailor man.
Tradesman would I were,
For I've ever rued the day I became a tar.
Boston
From Boston Harbor we set sail.
Captain Glen
There was a ship, a ship of fame.
Come loose every sail to the breeze
(Title and first line)
Doo Me Ama
As Jack was walking
Through the square.
Female Smuggler
Oh, come rest a while and
You soon shall hear.
Fishers
Oh, a ship she was rigged and ready for sea.
Golden Vanity
I have a ship in the North Country.
Harry Grady and Miss Elinor Ford
In Coursand Bay lying, the
Blue Peter flying.
Henry Martin
In Scotland lived three brothers of late.
Honor of Bristol
Attend you and give ear a while.
I am a brisk and sprightly lad.
Jack the Guinea Pig
When the anchor's weighed
And the ship's unmoored.
Jack Mainmast
Jack Mainmast once got half seas over.
La Pique
'Tis of a fine frigate,
La Pique was her name.
Rolling Home
All hands to man the capstan.
Sailor's Only Delight
The *George Aloe* and the *Sweepstake* too
With hey, with ho, for and a nony no.
Sir Francis Drake
Some years of late, in '68.
Sir Walter Raleigh Sailing in the Netherlands
Sir Walter Raleigh has built a ship in the Netherlands.
Song of the Fishers
Come all ye bold fishermen, listen to me.
Spanish Ladies
Farewell and adieu to you, Spanish Ladies.
Sailor's Resolution
How little do landsmen know.
Shannon and Chesapeake
Now the Chesapeake so bold, sailed from Boston
I've been told.
Will Watch
One day when the wind
From the northward blew keenly.
The Whale
Oh, 'twas in the year of '94
And June the second day.
When I Come Back
When I come back to Bonny Shadwell Dock,
Fol de rol tal do rara folderolla
How the girls will stare at their friend Jack Block!
With his chip cherry chow.
Admiral Benbow's Death
Come all you sailors bold, lend an ear.
A Sailor
A sailor is blythe and bonny, O.
Bold Sawyer
Come all ye jolly sailors, with courage stout and bold.
Brave News from Admiral Vernon
Come, loyal Britons, all rejoice, with joyful acclamation.
Distressed Sailor's Garland
When first I drew the breath of life
'Twas in the merry month of June.
Second of November
It was one November—the second day.

Ballads listed as anonymous by Masefield
Benjamin's Lamentations
Captain Chilver's gone to sea
I Boys, O Boys.
Cap'i Bover
Where have you been, my bonny honey?
Dansekar the Dutchman
Sing we seamen now and then.
Fight at Malaga
Come all you brave sailors
That sails on the Main.
Fair Maid's Choice
Being a pleasant song, made of a sailor.
Fight Between Captain Ward and Dover
Strike up, you lusty gallants.
Gallant Seaman's Resolution
A gallant youth at Gravesend lived, a seaman neither rich or poor.
Seaman's Reply
Hark! Hark! I hear the trumpet sound, it calleth me to come away.
Gallant Seaman's Return from the Indies
I am a stout seaman and newly come on shore.
Gallant Seaman's Song at Meeting His Betty
We'll meet, pretty Betty, my joy and my dear.
Greenwich Pensioner
'Twas in the good ship *Rover*
I sailed the world all round.
Honor of Bristol
Attend you and give ear awhile.
Ho for Lubberland
There is a ship, we understand,
Now riding in the river.
John Dory
It fell upon a holy day.
Lass of Lochroyan
Oh, who will shoe my bonny foot.
Lowlands of Holland
My love has built a bonny ship and set her on the sea.
Maydens of London
Come all you very merry London girls that are disposed to travel.
Mermaid
On Friday noon as we set sail.
North Country Collier
At the head of Wear Water
About twelve at noon.
Press Gang
Here's the tender coming
Pressing all the men.
Sailor Laddie
My love has been in London City.
Seaman's Compass
As lately I traveled towards Gravesend
Smuggler
O, my true lover's a smuggler, and sails upon the sea.
Teach, the Rover
Will you hear of a bloody battle?
Salcombe Seaman's Flaunt to the Proud Pirate
A lofty ship from Salcombe came,
Blow high.

Do you know any others? If so, lend a hand in this Camp-Fire work of saving these old chanteys and songs before it is too late. Send to Mr. Lomax direct, Y. M. C. A. Building, Austin, Texas.

ANOTHER definition of the spirit of adventure, though whether it is "biologically considered" I have my doubts. But then, I'm a bit shaky as to just what "biologically considered" means when it comes right down to brass tacks.

Bermuda.

In the March issue I saw a quoted opinion of Jack London on this subject, and the late famous yarn-spinner uttered a thought so widely at variance with my own ideas that I am giving you in brief my conception of the adventure spirit as it has affected and still affects myself.

Curiosity, pure and simple—that's the adventure spirit! Somewhere beyond the limit of physical vision lies the unknown, the supposedly inaccessible. Comes curiosity. Curiosity proves too strong for mental fear, though it may give a sharp jolt to mere physical courage; and out goes the adventurer, bound to satisfy his curiosity even at the cost of his life, even though the object prove after all a will-o'-the-wisp. The adventure lies not in the finding, but in the seeking, while yet the goal remains unseen and unknown. And the adventurer is a great or small adventurer in the proportion by which curiosity conquers fear.

Such is my notion of the spirit which moves so many men to perform otherwise unaccountable actions. I know it is so in my own case. Let some one tell me that there is some place I can not reach, something I can not do, and up rises All Powerful Curiosity. What is it? Where? If foot free, I want immediately to have a go.—A. E. DINGLE.

A DAINTY morsel from Henry Oyen of our writers' brigade:

Just noticed in one of the recent numbers of *Adventure* that there's mention of "Liver-Eating Johnson," of the Yellowstone country. Did your correspondent tell you how he got his name? Don't think it was because he had a weakness for "liver and." Far be it from such. I have it straight from a man who hunted with him a few years before he died: Johnson played king to his neck of the country, and there was only one young Indian, a Cheyenne chief, who dared to defy him. Said chief raided and burned Johnson's camp once while Johnson was away at his traps. "The ——!" said Johnson, when he returned and saw the ruins. "I'll eat his liver!" And, tradition saith, he made good the threat.—OYEN.

AS PREVIOUSLY announced, our Camp-Fire buttons are now ready for delivery. I think there's going to be no doubt as to a big demand for them. At this writing the first announcement of their being ready has not reached you, yet requests have been coming in right along, though the askers had only the vague preliminary announcements to go on, without knowing price or date of delivery. As the buttons were delivered to us long before we could notify you in print we have been sending them out to these early seekers. There will be enough for all. Though this first order may be exhausted before long, more will be ordered before it entirely disappears and, now that the die is made, re-orders will not take so long.

The button or badge is small, neat, inconspicuous and yet individual and easily seen. Enamel with gold-washed edgings, round, three-eighths of an inch in diameter, screw-back, with a clinch pin to hold in place. Three fields, blue, brown and green, for sky, earth and sea. The numeral 71 is the only lettering or design of any kind that appears on the badge, 71 being the sum of the letters of "Camp-Fire" when assigned their numerical positions in the alphabet.

Membership in our Camp-Fire is open to any one who has the desire to be a comrade. There is no ceremony of admission. And any member may apply for a badge. They are sent out at cost price, 25 cents covering badge and return postage to any part of the world.

I'm glad the badges are assured of a strong demand. There is a good idea back of their use and the badges themselves will, I think, win favor when you see them. Personally I'll be glad when I can locate a comrade among apparent strangers and I think most of us feel the same way.

IN RESPONSE to a Camp-Fire suggestion, a number of you have written in their own experiences in getting out of the clutches of old Mr. Demon Rum. No preaching, you understand; we're not conducting any temperance crusade. Just plain facts, given on the chance they may be of practical help to other comrades who are trying to cut it out. Here is one of the letters. It is our comrade E. E. Harriman, of our writers' brigade and "Ask Adventure," to whom he refers.

Pasadena, Calif.

For several years, having the restless foot, wandered around the country and very naturally picked up booze. First came malaria, then a morning drink, which soon grew into a quart a day. The fever was not cured, so I visited Hot Springs, Ark., taking four months' water cure. It proved a success, for I have never had the fever since, but the booze appetite remained.

For several years I hit it up pretty hard, then tried to quit, and I guess I swore off several hundred times only to go back again. I never reached the "bum a drink stage," but came very close.

THREE years ago I decided it was either quit or go under, for I am a lunger and have been for twelve yeafs, and booze was not helping me. Knowing I could not stand the pace much longer, I rolled my bed and struck out for Trinity County, Calif., landing in Hyampom, a valley, not a town.

As far as the eye could reach there was nothing but pines and mountains, valleys and streams. The sort of country that lifts a man out of himself, raises him to a higher plane and makes him clean whether he wants to or not. I spent four months in and close to Hyampom. Fishing, hunting and hiking. I forgot about booze, and to this day I have no desire for it and do not drink even beer.

Understand me, I am no anti-booze man, but I have seen some fine men go under from it and I know from experience that old John B. has a fierce kick. He always wins if you stay long enough.

WHILE on the subject let me tell you something about the trip.

Two of us left here on Sept. 16, 1916, by auto and, on arriving in Red Bluff, hired a truck and driver to take us and our outfit to Hayfork, about one hundred and fifty miles. From Hayfork to Hyampom on foot without outfit on mule back, about thirty miles. We walked about twenty miles, I guess, for we rode to the end of the highway about eight miles.

When we reached Hyampom my booze-soaked muscles were screaming with pain. We spent the night at a Mr. Butler's, and early the next morning started for the summit of Hayfork Mountain where we intended camping a few days to enjoy some real good hunting.

Don't think I will say much about that trip, for I always want to go back to bed and rest whenever it comes into my mind. We made it all right and after a short rest took a look at the country.

I'LL never forget the first sunset, and you know this country is noted for its beautiful sunsets, of which I have seen many but nothing to equal that one. Can you imagine hundreds of miles of country standing on end, thickly covered with pine trees and every known color and shade and many unknown covering the whole thing? Can you imagine the west a blaze of color and the east tinted yellow with a great big moon? Well, that is what I saw, only it don't come anywhere near telling you of the wonderful beauty.

I tell you, a man couldn't be anything but clean in this country.

NEVER saw so many deer in my life, or such streams of fish. Rainbow, steel-head and salmon trout. Quail and grouse are positively thick. Believe me, it's a man's country. I am crazy to go back, but can't get enough money together. I work two or three months, then have to rest the same length of time. Some day I hope to collect the correct amount and, *believe* me, I will hike for Trinity, locate a homestead and *Live.*

If you care to use this, hop to it, only please don't use my name.

BY THE way, to come back to the booze question. Tell any chap who wants to quit to go see Mr. Harriman. Just to look at him will make anything on two legs straighten his shoulders and take a brace. He sure is a man's man, and then some. He is *all* man.

If any one ever asks anything about Trinity County let me know. I sure will boost.

Excuse me for taking up so much of your time, but thoughts of Trinity send me back to the trails I dearly love.——— ——— ———.

THE Federal Board for Vocational Education, 200 New Jersey Avenue, Northwest, Washington, D. C., sent us a statement of the many practical helps and services they offer in reeducating disabled soldiers and sailors but there is not space to print them all, concisely stated though they are. Artificial limbs free, free medical treatment after discharge (for disability incurred in service), free vocational training with War-Risk insurance provision covering period of training and period of further disability, help toward suitable positions following training, etc. Fourteen district offices through the country.

If you were disabled in service make sure that you know definitely and in full all the many things the Board will do to help you. Personally I was amazed at the extent of the service offered. But all that service was fully and honestly earned by those in need of it and it would be only childish and wrong to refuse the service because of any mistaken pride. You might just as well refuse the "charity" of a decoration for valor.

THE adventures of our identification-cards in the Great War—if collected what a book they would make! Here is a sample, from a letter written before hostilities ceased:

Warrington, England.

It may interest you to receive a friendly word from one who has carried one of *Adventure's* serial identification-cards in his pocket for many years. The card remains with me yet, but as it is in the safe of this hospital along with other papers of value, Masonic certificates, etc., I can not give you its number.

Nevertheless it has traveled via Canada from Boston, U. S. A., over to the camps of Blighty and the wastes of France, where its bearer has during the past two years alternated between laying rails for France, under General "Jack" Stewart, and dodging "Jerry's" shrapnel, bombs, "flying pigs," and many of the other pleasant surprises "Jerry" entertains our boys with.

Your card was present at the Battle of Vimy, April 1917, at the Cambrai push of November, 1917, in the big retreat of March, 1918, and between times was all over the place in the terrain bounded by Arras, Cambrai, Peronne, Amiens, Paris, Abbéville and the Channel coast. Quite a big territory to cover, embracing nearly all of the ancient domains of Picardy and Artois. "Somme" battlefield it was! Never have Dumas romances seemed so real as when I *saw* Bethune, Le Fère, Beauvais, etc., etc. *ad. lib.*—No. 749285 Sapper ROGER F. GARDENER, 12th Canadian Railway Troops.

SOMETHING for us to be considering. Wouldn't it be a fine thing if we could gradually establish Camp-Fire "stations" or local headquarters all over the map? A place where we could register ourselves, or leave word for a comrade who would or might follow later, or run a good chance

of meeting other wandering or resident comrades?

Nothing pretentious. Just a "station," which might be in a tobacco-shop or any old place that was reputable. Bar-rooms and such barred. (Oh, yes, I know the objections to barring them, but this matter has to be considered from the general aspect and there are sound reasons for not making bar-rooms our permanent and "official" homes.)

How about it? Yes or no? If yes, what suggestions?

—Arthur Sullivant Hoffman.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

BY THE time this reaches you in print we shall know the result of the call for action on June twenty-fifth. I do not expect that the world will be set on fire, but I do hope that here and there some seeds will be sown, some publicity given to the needed work and enough workers enlisted to form the nucleus of an organization that itself is built on democratic lines.

A choice had to be made. First, organize by the usual method with the usual backing from men with money and the usual control by a few men at the head. It is the easier method and far more likely to succeed than the second, but it would be trying to further real democracy by an organization that is itself an *autocracy*. So the second method was chosen, despite the fact that it is almost impossible to make much headway at first by means of it. At least it does not betray democracy from the start. And in the long run it will be of more avail.

The movement must be from the people themselves, of them, by them, at all times under their control. Better a small right one than a big wrong one.

SINCE this is being written in the middle of May, there can be no guessing whether the response to the call will be very small or fairly considerable. But there is always the fact that even a few seeds sown will be working—in ways no man can measure—the right leaven into the national ferment. Sooner or later enough of the people to be effective will see the need and take hold.

So far as I personally am concerned, I have done what little I could in the way that seemed soundest and there is nothing more that I can do except continue preaching and working in a small way. Little enough, but I am only one American. You are another. There are many millions of us. It is no more my work than it is yours or any other American's. It lies with *you* fully as much as with anybody else.

JUST what shape this department will take from now on I do not know. Many interesting letters have come in, proving the seriousness with which many Americans are considering the road ahead of this people. Perhaps we can make the department a forum. You will remember that it was started as a forum but, the war being not yet over, there were not enough who saw the coming problems of peace to keep it going. Now it is different. The future has become the present. The difficulty would be in selecting, from so many opinions on so many subjects, letters for print in such way that balance and fair hearing could be maintained in our small space.

The department will have to be worked out as it goes along.—A. S. H.

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *postpaid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Camp-Fire Buttons

Neat, inconspicuous emblem to be worn in lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—auy one belongs who wishes to. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, postpaid, anywhere.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL SELL: First October and Mid-December, 1918; First and Mid-January, Mid-February, First and Mid-April, First and Mid-May, 1919. Fifteen cents a copy or $1.20 for the set, postpaid.—WALTER M. EVANS, 69 Gilmour St., Ottawa, Canada.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
B. W. BRINTNALL, 5527 Thirty-third Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brintnall.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, freshwater pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Fla. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, P. O. Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

9. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

10. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1
(Editor to be appointed.) Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

11. Mexico Part 2 Southern
EDGAR YOUNG, 84 Court St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering that part of Mexico lying south of a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, commerce.

12. North American Snow Countries Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin. Hunting, fishing, trapping. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in coin NOT stamps)*

Return postage not required from U. S. or Canadian soldiers, sailors or marines in service outside the U. S., its possessions, or Canada.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

14. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

16. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

17. North American Snow Countries. Part 6
H. S. BELCHER, The Hudson's Bay Company, Ft. Alexander, Manitoba, Canada. Covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie and Northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

18. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, Honolulu, T. H. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

19. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, 84 Court Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

20. South America. Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, 84 Court St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile; geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

21. South America Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Covering Venezuela, The Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

22. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

23. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, Box 807A.—R. F. D. No. 10, Los Angeles, California. Covering history, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, exports and imports, manufacturing.

24. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan: Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

25. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U. S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

26. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

27. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

28. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

29. ★ Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, 7 Place de Tertre, Paris, XVIII, France. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

30. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

31. ★ Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shot-guns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—**All Shot-Guns** (including foreign and American makes.) J. B. THOMPSON, Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo.

B.—**All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers** (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agrl., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen. Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Capt. A. M. Lochwitzky.

British East Africa

IF YOU mean to go a-roaming don't land on the East African coast expecting to pick up a job simply because you're a white man. Mr. Beadle explains why a white can only boss:

Question:—"I would like to ask you about British East Africa. What are the opportunities for adventure and sport? Are there many dangerous reptiles and animals there?

"What are the living conditions for white men there? What would the opportunities be for two healthy boys?"—HAROLD HIBBARD, Portland, Me.

Answer, by Mr. Beadle:—In answer to your first question, British East Africa is one of, if not the greatest countries for sport in Africa, big game

and small; adventure, too, if you are made that way and are lucky.

There are quite a number of dangerous reptiles, crocodiles and many kinds of snakes. The Black Mamba is the most deadly. And of animals, lion in plenty, rhinoceros, buffalo, elephant and leopard.

White men there do only boss jobs; all other work is done by natives, Indians or Goanese (a half-breed from the island of Goa, India). So, for the answer to the last question, I am sorry that I can not encourage you to go there until you have a profession or trade—and then such profession or trade would be limited to a few, such as rubber planting, fiber, or as agent for some commercial firm; and then you would have little opportunity for adventure or shooting. Native trading is no good now as the Indians compete against the white man.

The Sunken Lands of Arkansas

DID you know the Mississippi once ran up-stream? Or that the famous, recently reclaimed farming land in the sunken country of Northeastern Arkansas was the result of a great earthquake, still remembered by oldest inhabitants? You may want to take a fishing or hunting trip there; or even to buy a farm in this super-fertile section:

Question:—"Please give me some information regarding Big Lake, Arkansas. Is it a Govt. game preserve? Can one fish there?

"Also, what and where are the sunken lands of Missouri and Arkansas? Is there good farming land there? Has the land been reclaimed?"—F. R. SPIEGIELLE, Charles City, Iowa.

Answer, by Mr. Thompson:—There are sunken lands in both Southeast Missouri and Northern Arkansas. The greatest Missouri tract is in the overflow formed by Cane Creek and Little Black River. Those best known to the writer are in Mississippi County, Arkansas.

Big Lake, Arkansas, is a Government preserve. You can fish there, but commercial fishing is under control of the Government. It is formed by the widening of Little River and was for many years the source of much rivalry between clubs and market hunters, and was the largest shipping section for wild ducks in the U. S.

The sunken lands commence a little below Cape Girardeau, Missouri, and extend into most of northeastern Arkansas. The present conditions were created by the earthquake of 1813 when the land sunk and earthquakes were felt at intervals for almost a year. Audubon, the naturalist, made considerable note of it. For a short time the Mississippi River ran up-stream. Until drainage ensued, creating the most fertile farming area on the globe, it was a wilderness of swamp and of veritable fish and game paradise. Similar conditions prevailed in southern Tennessee, and Reelfoot Lake is a result of the earthquake.

For years it supported a population of market hunters, fishermen and trappers. These were recently forced to other pursuits when inundated lands were redeemed.

Rifles and Six-Guns

PERHAPS the rifle won the West, perhaps the six-gun. Then again, both may have lent a hand. Anyhow, here is a lot of interesting comment by two men who know what they're talking about:

Question:—"Just to get in on this gun chatter, let me say that I learned to use a gun at the tender age of 8, in the big timber of Minnesota. The first time that I ever fired a gun was away prior to that time, however. My mother, sister and three brothers had allowed me to visit the sugar camp with them. On the way to camp my oldest brother shot a ruffled grouse—partridge, we called them.

He reloaded the single-barreled Harper's Ferry smoothbore, set it against the log cabin, and began to gather sap. All the rest moved off. I tackled the gun, got it over a small log, braced my belly against the butt, locked both middle fingers over the trigger and—gosh, how quick I sat down! I had to set the butt on the ground and cock the gun by pushing down with both hands, but I had done it.

I scared the women folks crazy, got a shaking from Frank, my senior, had a sore spot on my front elevation, but, Lordy, how big I felt!

I have hunted with Mississippi Yaegers, Kentucky squirrel rifles, the old Harper's Ferry gun (for years), with paper cartridge Sharps that carried an ounce round ball, with Belgian muskets, with Ballards, Colts, Wessons, Henry, Spencer, L. C. Smith shotgun, with Winchesters.. As I write three Winchesters hang above me on the wall, .22 special, .32-.40, and a .45-.70 meat-getter, as Harry Knibbs calls it.

Having had a half century of gun experience I claim to be there to a certain extent, with knowledge of weapons and I smiled with a sincere pleasure when I read what Chas. Beadle said in the February 3rd issue. A .45 automatic will kick itself up if fired rapidly till it shoots far above the target. I have tried them out on the Beverly Hill Gun Club range and have had numerous others try them while I watched. There are few men who can hold one down to its work and rattle off the shots at the same speed that a fair gunman with a good old six-gun S. A. when spotting his bull every crack.

I have seen a man who had used an automatic for a year try both on a 25-yard target and his score, rapid fire, was 50 per cent. better with the old gun. Then one of the boys who had an automatic and boasted of its excellence, tried six shots at speed and his last shot went out at about 15 degrees above the target, each shot kicking it higher. He simply could not hold it down.

I own two D. A. six-guns, but I always use them as S. A. weapons. In case some guy bats me over the head and climbs my frame, I may use the self-cocking device to save his feelings, but not otherwise. I agree with Chester, but here is a point for the novice who wants to learn. Get to know the feel and hang of your gun just as a mechanic learns a tool. A good carpenter can drive a nail straight while he looks away from it. If you know your gun *right* it flips on the bull as it comes from the holster, at any short range, instinctively.

Take the empty gun in the privacy of your own room and practise drawing and throwing down on objects, also swinging directly on the bull from the holster, without any extra motion. I never throw down but shoot on the rise. To prove that I understood throwing down I have clipped both top and bottom of a 3-inch bull and centered it with the third shot, rapid fire, throwing down with a .44, but I like my own style better. I lose no motion.

My experience with the .32-.20 S. & W.: I once drilled a jack rabbit through the head at 93 yards, only to have him go on slowly hopping in a dazed fashion till I caught him. Never upset him. Yet it tears a thundering hole when the soft nose touches a bone in a bigger animal. But my good old Colts .45 is the burglar annihilator, elephant gun, whale-killer.

The S. & W. .44-.40 will do the work, too and do it up brown. One I had not long ago used up a 600-pound grizzly in three shots, which isn't so darned bad after all.

The .32-.20 may be what old Vincent, up in our mountains here, calls "A —— pea-shooter," but it is such a beauty and such a performer on the range and at small game that I love it. It will stay with me till I croak, and then my grandson gets it if he can shoot right.

In the argument concerning which gun opened up the West, I say the rifle. The six-gun was the scrapper's gun, the gun for brawls and murders and for most of the arrests by officers, but the rifle did the bulk of the real work in making buck Injuns absent and varmints scary. Let the ultra-modern hoot at the Winchester and praise his Ross or his Newton, but the .45-.70 or .45-.90 cleared a wide swath down which decent men could walk safely.

In the Russo-Turkish war there were many Russians killed at over two miles range by dropping fire from .45-.90 Winchesters. A gun that will do that is no slouch of a cannon. Remember what the mine superintendent said in the Led Horse Claim—"A Winchester is a mighty comprehensive weapon," and many a pioneer thanked his gods that it was so when he was up against red or white outlaws. Many such have found the rifle a better weapon, properly handled, than a six-gun."—E. E. HARRIMAN, Los Angeles, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—Mr. Harriman's experience with automatics seems to be similar to many others of which I know. I think the revolver at high speed lines up more naturally and accurately than the automatic. The double action is beyond all doubt quicker than the single action. I consider either one preferable to an automatic for serious work.

A good shot will draw a revolver and hit a can from three to six shots when the can is thrown in the air, the revolver being drawn after it was thrown. Also the revolver, caliber for caliber, seems to have more killing effect than the automatic, due to the soft lead bullet of the revolver expanding slightly.

I have never known of an instance where the bullet from a .45 Colt failed to knock a man off his feet. I do not think the .32-.20 is the equal of the .38 special for stopping power.

There is no doubt that the rifle killed off most of the bad characters, but I think the credit should go to Col. Colt for origination of the multi-shot weapon. I recollect an instance of a horse thief being killed with a .45 Colt at a distance of 260 yards. Short range weapon, eh?

British Honduras

APPARENTLY it's up to some venturesome soul to penetrate the jungles and ranges of this little known land and find out what it's like. The natives won't. They're too lazy. Anyhow, there is always a strange, compelling fascination about an unexplored country. Therefore we give you the following:

Question:—"Can you give me some general information about British Honduras? I am especially interested in the chances for placer mining there.

What is its topography, chief industry, and population? What sort of natives might one expect to find?

Has the interior been explored? What are its imports?"—L. S. D., Pensacola, Fla.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—Area 19,585 kilometers.

Population 37,000.

Capital, Beliz, or Belice, population 4,000.

Exports: a little mahogany, rubber, fruits and hides.

Imports: small quantities of cotton fabrics, flour, implements, etc., principally from the U. S. A.

Geography: Low lying, for the most part, with a few hills known as the Cockscombs Mountains, forming the highest elevations. A view from the top of Victoria Mt. to the east shows at close hand a number of thickly wooded hills about three hundred feet high and dropping abruptly to a flat, swampy, tropical jungle, marked here and there with sluggish rivers and streams. Beyond and beyond would be the coast and a chain of islands paralleling it. No human being could ever see this far in British Honduras, for a clear day is a rare thing, due to the excessive rainfall at all seasons. The actual temperature is not high, ranging from 26 to 30 centigrade, but on account of the humidity it is very oppressive and quickly saps the vitality. It is possibly for this reason that the inhabitants of British Honduras are easily the laziest of all Central America.

There are very few white people in British Honduras. The bulk of the population is negro and mulatto who speak a poor kind of English which puzzles a newcomer, a few pure Carib Indians, mixed Carib-Negro breeds, and Spanish-Indian or Spanish-Negro mixtures. The entire colony is sparsely settled and is distributed as follows: District of Beliz, 5,000; Corozal, 1,804; Orange Walk, 3,700; Stann Creek, 5,166; Toledo, 2,400; and Cayo, 2,000.

Very little is known of the interior of this country. As small as it is the people are too lazy to go back into it and see what it is like. They are content to roll around in filth and idleness and live principally on fish and the natural fruits and nuts of the near-by jungles. The British government keeps a few negro soldiers from Jamaica stationed at various points to preserve order. The colony is ruled by a governor, assisted by a congress of ten

members. The negroes of the colony are allowed to elect a queen, which they do with great pomp.

The natives along the coast barter back and forth among themselves, each coast town having a flotilla of canoes tied in front of it, and quite a bit of turtle shell is sold to local traders who export it to this country. In the hill country corn, rice, manioc (from which tapioca is made), cotton, aloe, coffee, cacao (chocolate), oranges, bananas, rubber, pepper, and many other products thrive easily. The price of land (government Crown land) is nominally fixed at five dollars a hectare (over two acres).

Traces of gold, silver and lead have been found in some of the creeks of this country, but nothing of any note. The formation of the Cockscombs is a hard granite with quartz veins cropping out in places. Hunting placer ground is a rather tedious process, due to the heavy growth of jungle.

The lowland was once sea-bottom and was doubtless built up to its present level by coral growth. There have been a few small placer operations at various points in the colony but I have never heard of one that amounted to much. For my part I would not suggest British Honduras if you are thinking of trying to locate placer ground or dredging ground. However, it will only cost you a $5 tax to try it out. That is what the government charges for prospecting license. And if you find anything you must declare it immediately, have it surveyed by a government surveyor and pay royalty on each ounce mined.

The laws of Spanish Honduras are much more liberal. Spanish and not British Honduras would be my suggestion for prospecting. Several of my answers regarding this country have been printed in *Adventure* Magazine during the past two years. Write to The Pan-American Union, Washington, D. C., for the booklet "Honduras—general descriptive data" for general information. Also write Department of Commerce, Latin-American Division, Washington, D. C., for supplements to commerce reports covering Spanish Honduras.

The Original Seven Seas

PERHAPS some of you may have still a different explanation of the origin of the term "Seven Seas." Here are two. Though no fixed definition can be found, anyone is entitled to his own theory:

Question:—"Be so good as to inform me what the expression the 'Seven Seas' signifies?

What seven seas are meant? How and when did the term originate?"—GEO. M. KLEIN, Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Answer, by Captain Dingle:—The term Seven Seas is hard to trace to its absolute source. There are almost as many definitions, and dates of origin, as there are waves on those Seven Seas. One of the most general suppositions is that the term embraces the Five Oceans and the Carribbean and Mediteranean Seas, which in bygone days were seas of distinct trades. For example, ships plied the great oceans on distant voyages or exploring cruises, while the Mediterranean and Caribbean Seas were sufficiently well known to have established firms trading to them with their vessels, the Levanters and West Indiamen.

There was another selection of Seas which many understood to be the Seven, but the reason is not very bright unless one remembers that sailors in days before steam made some very eventful voyages in remote regions, and were apt to recall such voyages by events that affected their ship—such as pirates in the China Seas, savages in the South Seas, slavers in the Arabian Sea, etc. These other Seven Seas were the Mediterranean, Caribbean, Baltic, Arabian, North, China, and South Seas.

Personally, although the evidence is not so clear to a landsman, I lean to the latter explanation. But there is not a fixed definition to be found, that I have even discovered, so it remains after all greatly a matter of opinion if not guesswork.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

DIVERS, JOHN STERLING. Last heard of in Paxton. Any one knowing his whereabouts kindly communicate with his son.—Address ROBERT S. DIVERS, General Delivery, Enid, Okla.

IZAT, JOHN. Last heard of in Cumberland, Md. Miner by trade. Any information of his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address E. E. HIBBS, Burnsville, W. Va.

MCCOLL, JOHN B. Last heard of at the 39th St. Y. M. C. A., New York, November, 1917. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—Address A. M. BUCK, Surf Inlet, B. C.

MEAD, JOSEPH T. Age twenty-two years. Last heard of at Spokane, Washington, in 1915. Any information will be appreciated.—Address W. G. THOMPSON, Co. H, 62nd Inf., Camp Lee, Va.

LENTZ, GEO. THEO. Last heard of in Lancaster, Pa. Any information will be gratefully appreciated.—Address FRANK J. MILLER, 2505 A St., Lincoln, Nebraska.

MAGILL, ROBERT. Left home at fourteen years of age. Last heard from in Africa some years ago. Any information will be gratefully appreciated.—Address GEORGE H. MAGILL, 101 South 6th Ave., Tucson, Arizona.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

WATSON, PVT. A. W. No. 3105125 "C" Company, 1st Battn., Second C. O. Regt., C. E. F. Please let me have your address. Also Corporal Fee, Sgt. Laucatch (Australian) and other Shun boys of "C" Company.—Address PTE. BILL WOLFE, Box 1242, Habana, Cuba.

EARLE, JOHN ERNEST. Cousin. Last heard of December 9th, 1918, Camp Funston, Kansas. Was a corporal and with the 11 Co., 164 Depot Brig. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—Address EVA CRANE, R. No. 3, Box 89, Wewoka, Okla.

HOFFNER, MR. and MRS. FREDERICK. Left Dobrinka, Apronsf, Russia, in 1898. Mrs. Hoffner's maiden name was Mary Nuss. Think they went to farm in South Carolina. Will be grateful for any information.—Address PVTE. J. OSTERMAN, H. D. 7th Reg. U. S. M. C., San Juan, Santiago de Cuba.

WICKCLIFF, EARL. Last heard of was with the Ordnance Department, U. S. Army, stationed at Camp Grant, Ill. Believed to be in Oklahoma, Texas or Detroit, Michigan. Any information will be gratefully received.—Address C. A. Wildine, 446 Cass Ave., Detroit, Michigan.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

PHILLIPS, ORRESTES, C. Age forty-two, height about five feet five inches, dark hair and eyes, hair always inclined to curl. Last heard from five years ago, then in Jackson, Mississippi. Any information of his whereabouts will be gratefully appreciated by his mother.—Address MRS. HANNAH PHILLIPS, California, Pa.

MORROW, THOMAS. He was once in the 4th U. S. Cavalry and once stationed at Fort Apache, Arizona. He was about five feet seven inches tall. Black hair and eyes, stocky build; would now be about sixty-odd years old. Was last heard from in California about twenty-six years ago. Any information concerning him will be greatly appreciated by his sister.—Address MRS. MARGARET C. M. BRETZ, 7311 Vincennes Ave., Chicago, Ill.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the First July or Mid-July issues of Adventure. They can get name of the inquirer from this magazine:

BIRD, RHODORA; Bohinz, Jack; Bowman, Clarence L.; Coates, Frank; Coles, Hildegard R.; Jenks, Althea, Nellie; Company A., 1st Kentucky; Curran, Hugh; Doyle, Michael; Duncan, George R.; Eaton, Herbert P.; Foley, Peter; Gross, Marlea; Jerries, Charles D.; Jenks, Frank E.; Johnson, Sam H.; King, Vance Herold; Keeffer (or Keiffer) Lee, Delbert C.; Marshall, Bert W.; Martin, Abraham; Meggison, John B.; Reeves, Wallace; Robinson, Richard Frederick; Ross, John K.; Rundhangen, Olaf; Erickson, Bernard; Smith, Forman; Thompson, Colman; U. S. Naval Aviation Repair Base; Wardell, Norman; West, W. Carleton; Hetterich, Carl; Ferguson, Herman; Stair, John; Haman, Bruce; Williams, H. M.; Wright, Len K.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan, Lee Hays; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; G. H. Bennett; Bryon Chrisholm; Wm. S. Hilles.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

ARNOLD, TED; Aspinartos, A.; Brady, Grover C.; Brison, Clarence F.; Bishop, L. O.; Benson, E. W.; Babcock, Lucius A.; Beaton, G. M.; Carr, Mrs. Fred; Cosby, Arthur F.; Collins, John; Casselberry, Tex; Coles, Bobby; Campbell, Frank U.; Dorr, H. S.; Engleby, B.; Geers, Mrs.; Harvey, Ted; Hines, Joseph; Harris, Walter J.; J. C. H.; Hart, Jack; Harding, James; Harrison, Tillson L.; Hiskert, Wm.; Hunt, Dan'l O'Connel; Johnson, Walter R.; Kuckaby, William; Kohn, Edward; Lee, Wm. R.; Lofler, Mrs. Harry; Leighton, Capt.; Larisy, Jack; Lee, C.; "Lonely Jock"; MacDonald, Donald Carr; MacMahon, J. A.; MacNarnee, Alva I.; Miller, B. J.; Morrisy, K. A.; McCord, P. A.; Maples, C. M.; McGraw, John; Nelson, Frank Lovell; Nichols, Leon; Norman, Cook William; Richards, Lewis S.; Reid, Raymond; Rodgers, Stewart; Reed, H. W.; Schmidt, Walter; Scott, James F.; Seaman, W. E.; Shephard, H. O.; St. John, Irving T.; Stanley, Jack; Swan, George; Taylor, Jim; Van Tyler, Chester; Von Gelucke, Byron; Wetherell, Delos, E.; Ward, Frank B.; Williams, Bertram I.; Williams, Ray; Williams, W. P.; Western, S. S.; Yelton, Roy T.; Young, Leon.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you. Satisfactory proof of identity must accompany each claim for mail.—Address J. E. Cox, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD
MID-AUGUST ADVENTURE

Ten stories come to you with the Mid-August number. Two you will find mentioned on the second page of this issue. Here are the others:

PARIAHS OF PIPEROCK — *By W. C. Tuttle*
Ike and *"Dirty Shirt"* again take a hand in the battle that rages around demon rum.

THE WHITE FROG — *By Charles Beadle*
An African story that you will like.

ON BAYOU NOIR — *By Hermann Bacher Deutsch*
In which an old alligator plays a part in the affairs of a French-American colony.

RILEY GRANNAN'S LAST ADVENTURE—AND AFTER — *By Sam C. Dunham*
What the miners heard by a grave in the wind-swept desert.

A MESSAGE FOR HAGGERTY — *By Charles Wesley Sanders*
Straight past the stop signal drove the big engine—and trouble began.

SAVAGES. A Four-Part Story. Part III — *By Gordon Young*
In the South Sea Islands *Gilbert Lang's* trail to vengeance leads into dangerous places.

APRON STRINGS — *By Edgar Young*
He was a wanderer, and he had great ideas for conquering the world. Then he walked into the little telegraph office.

UNDUE INFLUENCE — *By Robert J. Pearsall*
John Partridge has an adventure in mid-ocean.

How Many Faces has Four Bits ?

Funny thing about money. A half dollar looks different every time you lift it out of your pocket. It's hardly big enough to count when you are taking a girl to a show and supper, but next day it looks like a million dollars when you invest it at a lunch counter.

The more it buys the harder it is to spend.

All of which is suggested by what a millionaire said to me the other day—as free a spender as I ever passed a hotel evening with:—

"Look here, Jim," he said, "I can't see that 50 cent size of Mennen's —it's too much coin to spend at one time for shaving cream."

"But it's a bigger tube," I protested, "you get more for your money than in the regular 35 cent size."

"I know," he answered, slipping half a dollar to the waiter, "but 35 cents is my price for shaving cream."

Ain't human nature wonderful?

In our fifty cent tube of Mennen's there's enough shaving cream to bring peace and the joy of living into a man's life every morning for many months—

Enough cream to soften the meanness out of two seasons' crops of stubble.

And a quality of shaving cream so fine, so unusual, so remarkable—

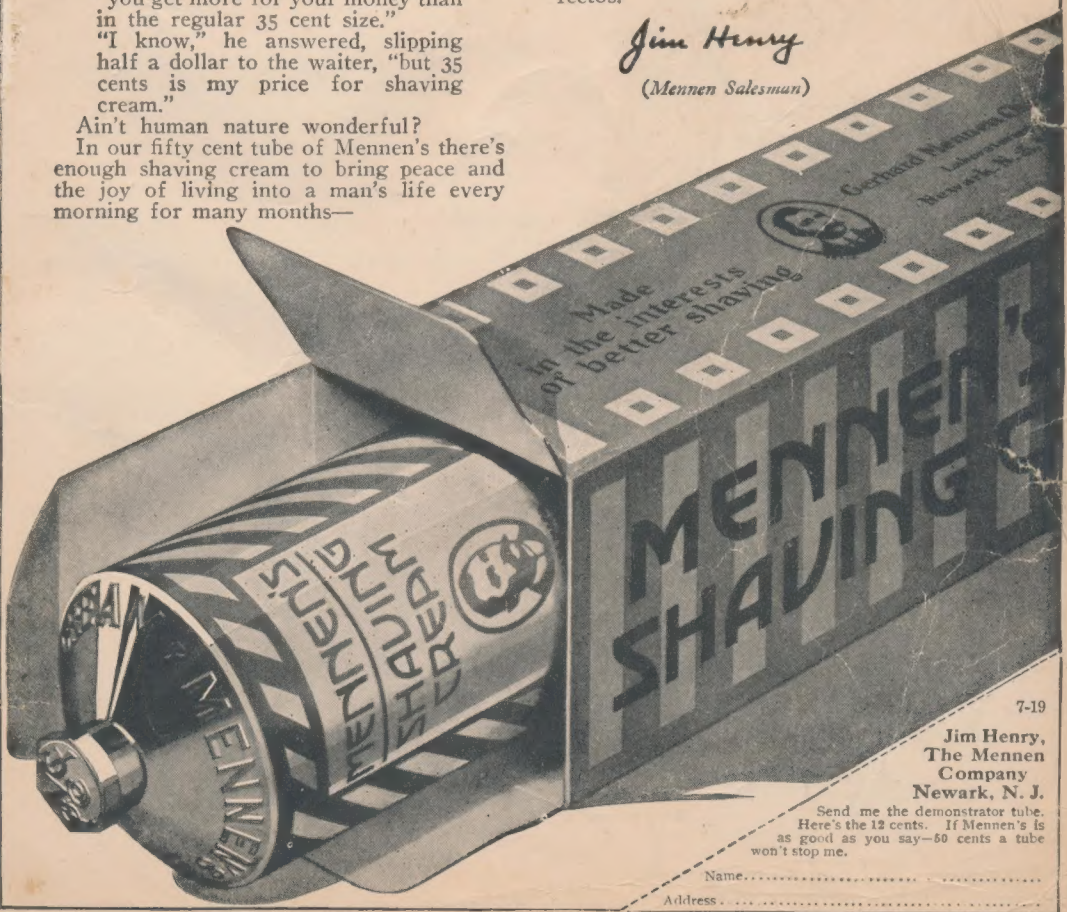
—say, have you ever tried Mennen's Shaving Cream? Have you taken a half inch on a drenched brush and whipped it for three minutes into a creamy, firm, moist lather—with the brush only—using a lot of water, hot or cold—

—and then slipped the razor down the east facade of your jaw in the most deliciously glorious shave of your career?

You've got to know Mennen's to like it. Send me 12 cents and I'll mail a demonstrator tube. Try it! Then reason with yourself calmly if many months of such shaves aren't worth the price of two Perfectos.

Jim Henry

(*Mennen Salesman*)



7-19

Jim Henry,
The Mennen Company
Newark, N. J.

Send me the demonstrator tube. Here's the 12 cents. If Mennen's is as good as you say—50 cents a tube won't stop me.

Name.....

Address.....

VICTORY

. . . and cigarettes helped to win it

What a part the cigarette played!

In those grim, tense moments, waiting for the word to "go"; in that blessed lull, hours afterward, just before the relief party came; in those other, sterner moments when his spirit fought to smile, what was the thing he wanted most?

The cigarette!

And now, with the big job done, what so much as the cigarette will help "keep him smiling" until he's home again?

A fact:

Over 740 million Fatimas have so far been shipped to our soldiers abroad. And more are constantly on the way for the boys who still are over there.

Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co.

FATIMA

A Sensible Cigarette